

JULY/AUGUST 2005

AMERICA'S COMING ECONOMIC CRISIS: A LOOK BACK FROM THE ELECTION OF 2016 BY JAMES FALLOWS

THINKING THE
UNTHINKABLE
BY SCOTT STOSSEL

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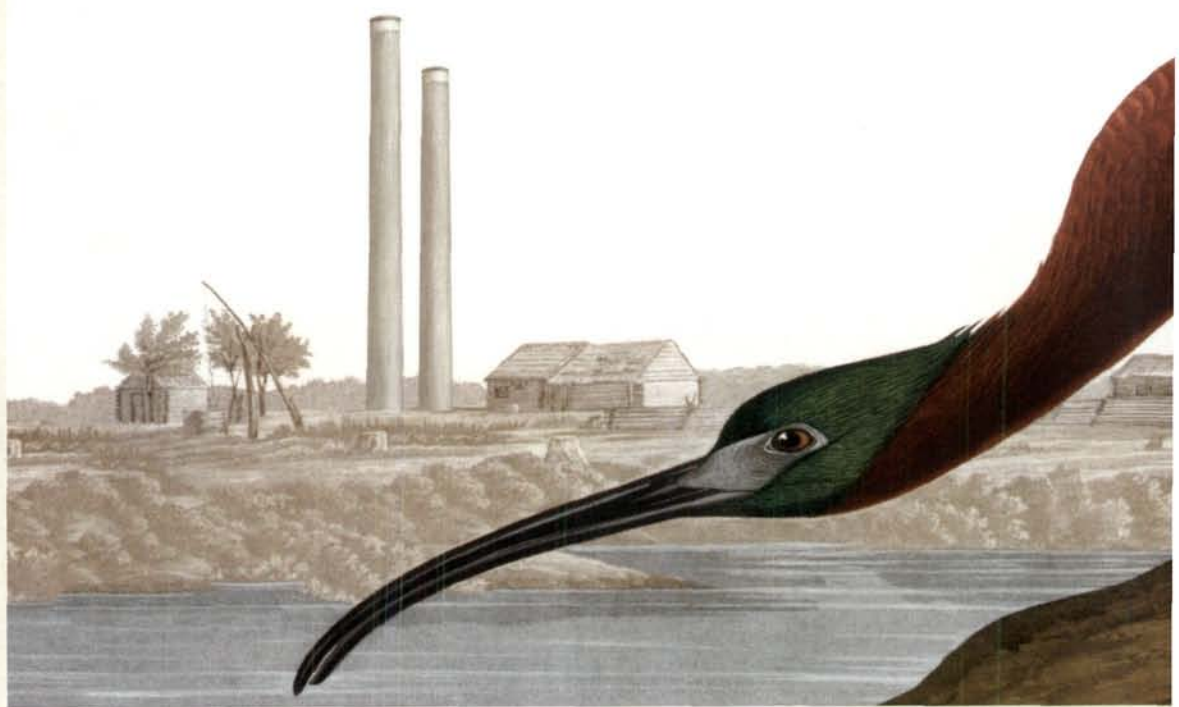
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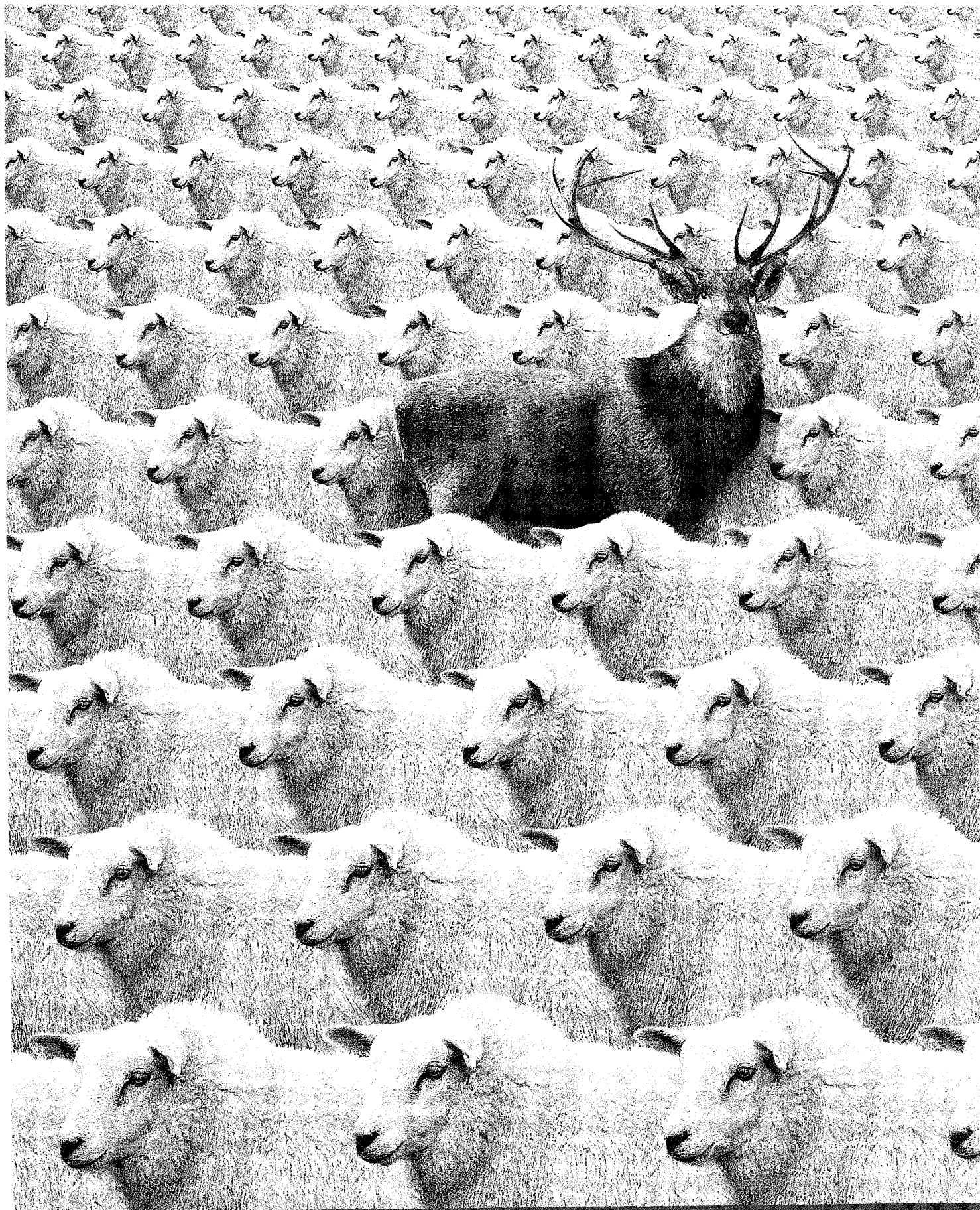
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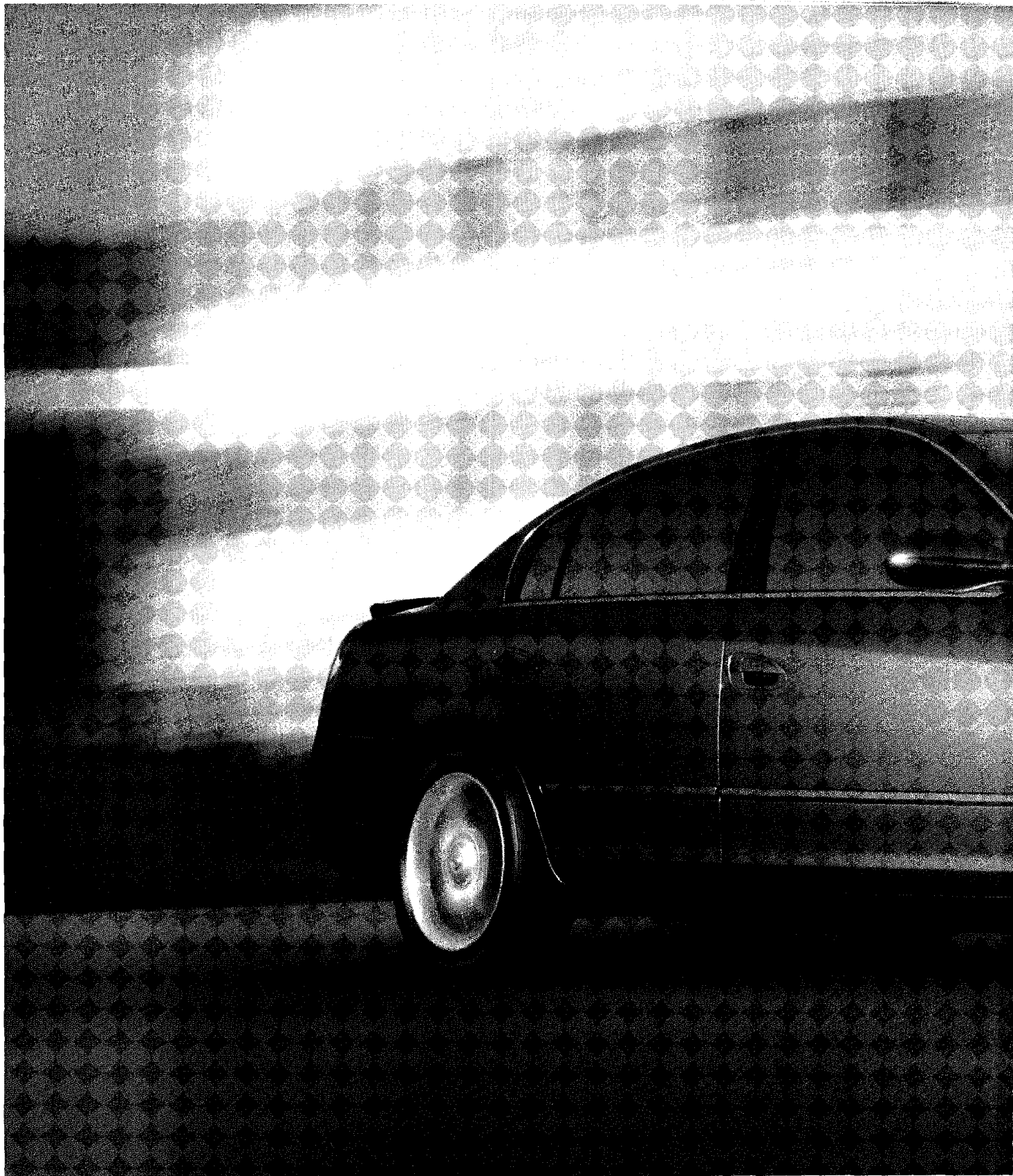


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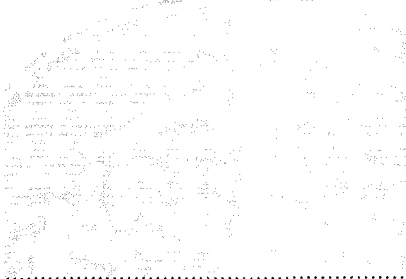


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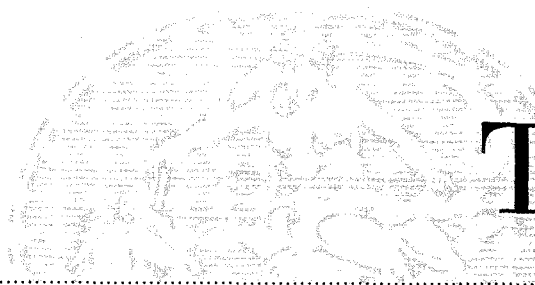
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*Cover photomontage by John Ritter
Heading and Calendar drawings by Istvan Banyai*



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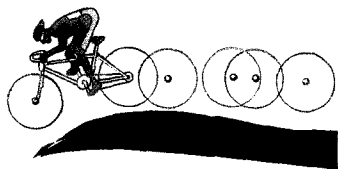
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JULY 2

Racing Toward Retirement

Lance Armstrong will attempt to add to his record of six consecutive victories in the Tour de France, which begins today. Win or lose, the race will be Armstrong's last—he announced in April that he'll retire afterward. Debate about his legacy is already under way. Europeans say that without victories in Spain's and Italy's Grand Tours to match his French titles, Armstrong hasn't bested the Belgian Eddy Merckx and other biking legends. (Of course, they *would* say that.)

JULY 4

Deep Space Skeet-Shooting

NASA's Deep Impact space probe—which shares its name with a 1998 film about an asteroid that nearly destroys Earth—fires an 820-pound "impactor" today that will travel at 22,817 miles per hour into the Tempel-1 comet to collect scientific data. The

JULY 8

Trouser-Stuffer Sentenced

Sandy Berger, Bill Clinton's national-security adviser, faces sentencing today after pleading guilty in April to removing classified documents from the National Archives last year and destroying them. Berger, who was doing research as the Clinton administration's liaison to the September 11 commission, says the crime was a simple case of fatigue and bad judgment; a Department of Justice inquiry cleared him of any cover-up attempt. The maximum penalty for the misdemeanor is one year in prison and a \$100,000 fine, but Berger, under a plea deal, is likely to pay only \$10,000; he will probably be eligible to have his security clearance reinstated in three years. Early speculation about the crime focused on Berger's socks, though he later confessed that some of the purloined papers were stuffed in his jacket and pants.

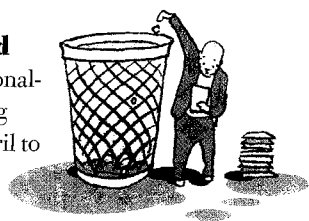
blast is expected to produce a crater two to fourteen stories deep, at least the size of a house and perhaps as big as a football stadium. The resulting plume of rubble should be visible from Earth by telescope. In a patriotic flourish, NASA scheduled the event for Independence Day.



JULY 6-8

G8 Summit

World leaders retreat to rural Scotland today for their annual economic summit. Tony Blair, this year's G8 president, has resolved to cudgel donor nations into following through on earlier pledges to halve world poverty. He has outlined a deal that would double aid to Africa, to \$50 billion a year; cancel the poorest nations' debts; eliminate subsidies that allow richer countries to compete with African products; and coax donors to commit 0.7 percent of their gross national product to aid programs. As usual,



CALENDAR

WHAT TO WATCH FOR IN THE WEEKS AHEAD

the United States (which gives 0.15 percent of its GNP) has its own, separate development program; and as usual, so does France—one likely to annoy Americans. President Jacques Chirac would establish international taxes on air travel, capital flows, greenhouse-gas emissions, credit cards, and multinational corporations.

JULY 31

Revamping the Tax Code

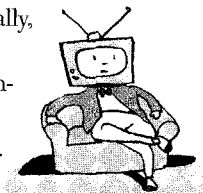
A group impaneled by President Bush must unveil its recommendations by today for reforming the federal tax code, which numbers more than 60,000 pages and by some estimates costs Americans 6.6 billion hours and \$140 billion in prep time every year. Headed by the flat-tax advocate and former senator Connie Mack, the panel looked closely at consumption taxes (a federal value-added or sales tax) and a flat tax on income. Most advisers to the panel, including Alan Greenspan, favor a hybrid system, one that would continue the administration's quiet effort to exempt all savings and investment from taxation. (Scrapping the progressive income tax and popular exemptions all at once is considered politically unfeasible.) Congress will deliberate on the recommendations in the fall at the earliest, with action expected next year.



AUGUST 1

Gore TV

Today Al Gore launches Current, a cable-TV network that the former vice president says will "empower" eighteen-to-thirty-four-year-olds "to engage in the dialogue of democracy and to tell the stories of their lives using the dominant medium of their time." That means it will show popular Google searches every half hour, interspersed with a stream of "pods"—MTV-style segments tailored to short attention spans, many of which will be submitted by viewers over the Internet (which, to be fair, Gore never actually claimed to have invented). Initially, Current will be capable of reaching about 20 million viewers.



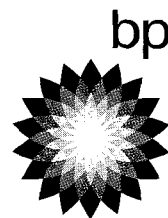
AUGUST 15

Moving Day in Gaza

Today the Gaza Strip's roughly 8,500 Israeli settlers pack up synagogues, cemeteries, and personal belongings and decamp for new homes several miles away, within Israel's 1967 borders. If Gaza's 1.3 million Palestinians cooperate in the move, the houses may be left for them; otherwise they'll be razed. Each Israeli family will receive \$200,000 to \$500,000 in compensation. It is hoped that the settlers will leave peacefully, but one poll suggested that 74 percent will resist passively, and 11 percent with force. Israeli army and police forces will be on hand to remove settlers who resist. —MATTHEW QUIRK

speaking clearly

Ross J. Pillari
President,
BP America



Dear *Atlantic* Reader:

Many challenges are involved in meeting the world's energy needs, from growing oil consumption to climate change to the security of fuel supplies. As a major supplier of energy, BP believes we have a responsibility to take an active role in addressing these challenges.

Today we are working and investing to increase the availability of an energy source we feel is a key part of the solution—natural gas. The development of renewable energy sources will take time, but the “clean bridge” to this future must include the increased development and use of natural gas.

Why natural gas? Simply put, it's a clean, abundant, and safe way to generate power.

Natural gas emits about 30 percent less carbon dioxide (which can contribute to global warming) than oil, and about 45 percent less carbon dioxide than coal. Because natural gas produces very little sulfur dioxide emissions, its use helps reduce acid rain. These are major reasons why natural gas has become the fuel of choice for new power generation, and why more and more electricity power generators are switching to gas.

In fact, natural gas is well on its way to becoming the world's primary energy source. The U.S. already consumes more than 22 trillion cubic feet of gas per year, making it the world's largest natural gas user. With demand expected to grow by nearly 10 percent over the next five years, domestic sources alone won't be able to meet the growing U.S. appetite, which is already beginning to exceed domestic supply. By 2010, demand may outstrip supply by as much as 3 trillion cubic feet per year. How, then, do we ensure that America's future natural gas needs can be met?

Fortunately, worldwide reserves of natural gas are abundant—some seventy years in proven reserves and that much again in probable reserves. Natural gas also travels well. When it is liquified, through a cooling process, the volume of natural gas is reduced by 600 times. This allows it to be loaded onto specially designed ships and transported over long distances safely and efficiently. The liquefied natural gas (LNG) is then reconverted to gas after it arrives at its destination.

The LNG industry has an excellent safety record with not a single loss of containment in more than 40,000 voyages. BP has contributed to this track record with thirty years of safe LNG experience on both land and water.

LNG enables the U.S. to safely tap into world supplies and to be less dependent on any single source. The Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, is a major LNG supplier to North America, and BP operations in this country continue to provide increased global capacity for liquefied natural gas.

At BP, we believe natural gas is an obvious choice to help meet America's growing demand for cleaner, accessible energy while also increasing U.S. energy security. It won't solve all of our energy needs ... but it's a start.

Sincerely,

Ross J. Pillari
President, BP America

“Speaking Clearly” is a series of writings by American thought leaders and cultural icons on their personal interactions with the environment and our shared responsibility to sustain it. Please return to these pages in the coming months for additional installments.

On Natural Gas

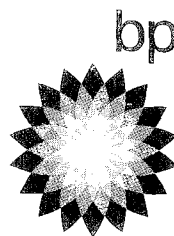
It's time to clear the air about natural gas.

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The Future While renewable energy technologies continue to be developed, we believe natural gas can be the clean bridge to an alternative energy future. By shifting the fuel mix to cleaner burning natural gas, the U.S. could reduce emissions of CO₂ by up to 53%.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Environmentalists and the Supreme Court

Benjamin Wittes, looking at the possible effects on environmental conservation of President Bush's upcoming Supreme Court nominations ("The Hapless Toad," May *Atlantic*), drives into a vast sand trap. Given that the fundraising brochures of every major environmental group assure the public that the only possible way to "preserve," "conserve," or "save" almost every element of our natural surroundings is government ownership, one might reasonably expect a wealth of research comparing the outcomes of public and private ownership on various species and habitats. I have found nothing with any scholarly heft. In stating that the Court, in deferring to private property rights, will be trashing the environment, Wittes is merely repeating one of the urban legends of the statist left, without a shred of evidence. It is time for America's intelligentsia to drop their automatic hostility to private property and work with rural landowners and others to learn how environmental protection and property rights reinforce each other.

Bruce P. Shields
Wolcott, Vt.

Benjamin Wittes states that the interstate-commerce clause is the backbone of civil-rights legislation. It was the backbone of this legislation only because Congress made the clause the *raison d'être* for civil rights. This was done not because integrating restaurants necessarily affected interstate commerce but because the Senate Judiciary Committee, the place where civil-rights legislation should have started, was run by the segregationist Senator John Stennis, of Mississippi. President Johnson knew that if civil-rights legislation went into this committee, it would

never come out. Perhaps environmentalists should be creative in using sections of the Constitution other than the interstate-commerce clause to advance their cause.

Lawrence R. Dworkin
Wallingford, Pa.

Getting Out Right

James Fallows is correct that the military must change its tactics if we are to win hearts and minds in Iraq ("Getting Out Right," April *Atlantic*). Nevertheless, that objective is inherently political, and judging from my own experience in both Vietnam and Iraq, relying primarily on new military thinking is unlikely to do the trick. The military carries weapons in places like Iraq for a reason: its primary mission is to apply lethal force. If left to its own devices, the military will always sacrifice the prolonged, vague, and distant achievement of political objectives to the immediate and more limited objectives of the battlefield. Therefore, the primary role of well-qualified civilians must be substantially enhanced, which in turn means that their protection must not be outsourced to private security firms.

Civilian professionals need sufficient authority to ensure that military and political operations are integrated in mutually supportive ways. That will require a counterinsurgency doctrine broader than any yet written or recommended by the military. They also need to be engaged directly on the ground in active insurgency environments. In Vietnam civilian USAID officers were stationed in exposed field positions, relied on the military for territorial security, and assumed the risks associated with the attempt to win hearts and minds (however unsuccessful those efforts ultimately were). That contrasts with the fundamentally

counterproductive current practice of assigning responsibility for the security of civilian officers and contractors to private firms.

To avoid casualties, civilians in the most contested areas of Iraq are seldom permitted to leave their heavily defended compounds; Iraqis are often humiliated at barriers or security checkpoints; and death, injury, or property damage occurs as convoys traveling at high speeds and close intervals do not stop or slow down for traffic or pedestrians. By restricting movement or insisting on large armed escorts, security personnel unwittingly determine the overall scope and pace of the strategic effort to win hearts and minds. This must stop if there is to be even the slightest hope of political success. Unfortunately, that is also likely to increase the number of civilian casualties among American and allied personnel. Would the slim probability that changing our approach would succeed at this late date be worth that cost?

Jerry Silverman
Armstrong Atlantic State University
Savannah, Ga.

It's difficult to imagine that General Charles Krulak's concept of a "Strategic Corporal," which James Fallows mentions in his article, can be implemented by putting cunning privates and corporals on both sides against one another. Our side—without the language, without the cultural knowledge, facing an urban insurgency that has the support of a segment of the population—will find it difficult to move about. General Krulak's concept suggests that insurgencies can be defeated by the cunning of a few young guerrillas. But the opposition, which has different rules of engagement, does not stand still, and is no less cunning.

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*There, a man rich in means, but starved in
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and European fashion.*

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Apparently,

fear of commitment had yet to be invented.



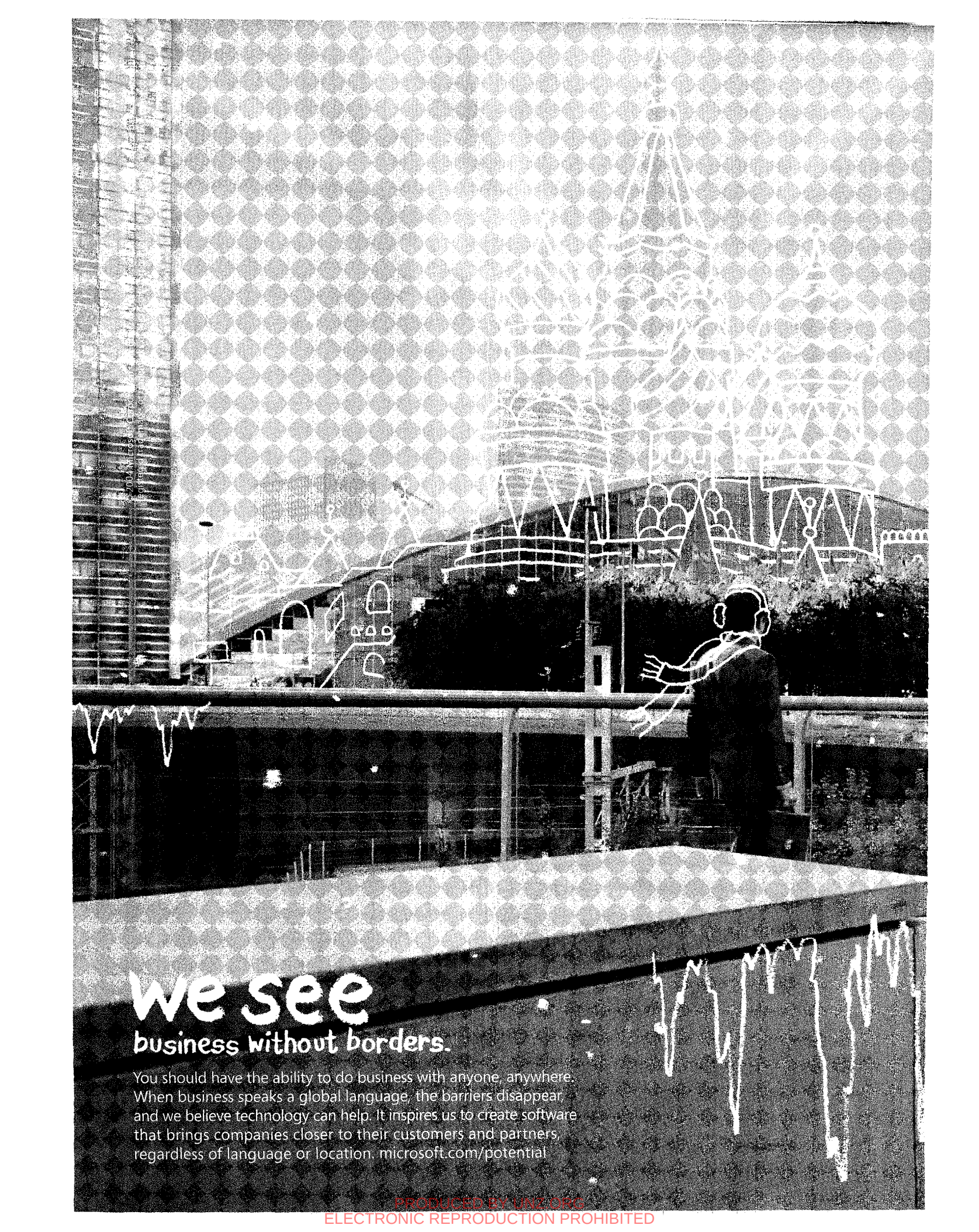
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Winning hearts and minds is essential when facing insurgency, and it cannot be done quickly. The Department of Defense has suggested that on average it takes nine years to defeat an insurgency. Nation building, of course, takes much longer.

Mario Salzmann
Chula Vista, Calif.

Chief Justice Rehnquist

Jeffrey Rosen ("Rehnquist the Great?," April *Atlantic*) praises William Rehnquist for his administrative skills and pragmatic efficiency in maintaining a smoothly running Supreme Court. But do punctuality and management skills make a great chief justice?

By glossing over the most disturbing elements of Rehnquist's career, Rosen paints too moderate a picture of the justice. Rehnquist's devotion to tradition and to majority rule may explain many of his positions, especially those pertaining to segregation in the South. But such positions are alarming. Rehnquist's avid defense of mass arrests of Vietnam protesters, and remarks such as "It's about time the Court faced the fact that white people in the South don't like the colored people," suggest a man much more concerned with institutions and traditions than with basic human rights. *Bush v. Gore*, which had perhaps the most far-reaching consequences of all decisions handed down by the Rehnquist Court, remains inexplicable.

I agree that Justice Rehnquist unifies and moderates the Court better than Scalia or Thomas probably would, but history may not judge him too kindly.

Stuart Pierce
Davis, Calif.

Jeffrey Rosen replies:

I agree that Bush v. Gore is hard to reconcile with Chief Justice Rehnquist's stated preference for deciding political questions in legislatures rather than the courts, and I said so. But as I also noted, the grandiose idea that only the Court can save the country in times of crisis is consistent, for better or worse, with Rehnquist's pragmatism.

Gas Pains

Robert Bryce's article on the U.S. military's gas consumption in Iraq ("Gas Pains," May *Atlantic*) is factually inaccurate, tactically misguided, and a classic case of a red herring. Bryce mistakenly asserts that fuel is the American center of gravity in Iraq. He overlooks a crucial point: Kuwait has been giving the United States nearly all the gas it has required ever since the invasion of Iraq, in 2003 (it began charging the United States only this past March). Although the American military could certainly stand to be more fuel-efficient, fuel is hardly an Achilles' heel.

Bryce's timing couldn't be worse. After the unexpected success of the January elections, insurgent attacks on U.S. convoys and supply depots dropped dramatically, a development that took significant pressure off U.S. supply lines. More important, his essay betrays the same type of tactical-conceptual error that has plagued U.S. military thinking ever since World War II: the idea that if the right resources and personnel are put in the right place at the right time, then victory is assured. Bryce's ham-handed comparison of the modern U.S. military to General Patton's Third Army displays his gross lack of military understanding. In truth, America's troubles in Iraq center on a misguided counterinsurgency strategy, not a bad energy policy.

Captain David J. Morris
U.S. Marine Corps (ret.)
San Diego, Calif.

The Pentagon's attention to the heavy cost in lives and dollars associated with fuel logistics has been diverted ever since the 2001 report by Admiral Richard Truly's Defense Science Board panel, on which I served, was largely accepted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff just sixteen days before 9/11. But the kinds of issues Robert Bryce describes are now refocusing that attention. A gradual but promising solution is emerging: highly energy-efficient military vehicles.

Last September my team's independent study "Winning the Oil End-

game" (free at www.oilendgame.com), co-sponsored by the Department of Defense, extended the DSB analysis. We found that over a few decades, while sustaining or improving performance, the Pentagon's land, sea, and air platforms could cost-effectively save two thirds of their fuel directly, plus more fuel to deliver platforms and fuel. Such fuel efficiency would save many lives, billions of dollars a year in fuel cost, and perhaps ten times that in logistics cost, while making war-fighting more capable—and ultimately less necessary.

That's because the key to agile, fuel-frugal forces is ultralight but ultrastrong materials. As Pentagon R&D helps to commercialize advanced materials and manufacturing processes, it could transform the civilian economy as profoundly as the Defense Department did when it created the Internet, GPS, and microchips. Over the next few decades Defense could thereby enable business to eliminate U.S. oil use at a profit. That would enhance both national security and economic strength far more than just leaner fuel logistics.

Amory B. Lovins
Rocky Mountain Institute
Old Snowmass, Colo.

Robert Bryce replies:

I cannot dispute David Morris's credentials, but he does not have his facts right. According to the Defense Energy Support Center, from March of 2003 to January of 2005 the United States spent more than \$1.3 billion on fuel for Operation Iraqi Freedom. Yes, the Kuwaitis have been supplying significant amounts of fuel to the United States at no cost, but that satisfies only part of the military's total fuel needs. Further, Morris seems to suggest that logistics issues are not important on the battlefield—and yet he faults me for my "gross lack of military understanding." I stand by every word I wrote.

As for Amory Lovins, I agree with virtually all his points; I just wish more people would listen to him. That said, we disagree on the 2001 letter from the Joint Chiefs of Staff regarding the DSB fuel-efficiency study. The Joint Chiefs agreed with the DSB study only on the most general issues. When it came to making fuel efficiency a "mandatory performance parameter" for

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new weapons systems, they refused to go along, saying that it "should not adversely impact" the ultimate purchase of a system.

Hitler Shrine

Timothy Ryback ("The Hitler Shrine," April *Atlantic*) says that by the early 1950s the Berghof ruins were attracting a steady stream of tourists and *Hitlerpilger*. He goes on to say, "Fearing that the site was becoming a shrine, the Germans had it dynamited and the resulting debris hauled away." The article is not clear about when that happened.

My family and I, on R&R from Navy duty in Iceland, visited Berchtesgaden in July of 1965. One afternoon we took a guided tour of what my diary says was "Kehlstein House, Hitler's tea house called the Eagle's Nest by Americans." This involved a long bus ride up the mountain to a parking area and then a ride in a very ornate elevator inside the mountain up to the house. The implication of the article is that no such structure was there in 1965, so I'm wondering what it was we saw. Can Mr. Ryback tell me?

*Harley D. Wilbur
Kensington, Md.*

Timothy Ryback writes that "the Obersalzberg was placed under U.S. administration" from 1945 to 1995. That is only part of the story. The Nazi Party guesthouse, which suffered little damage in the April 1945 bombardment, was rehabilitated as the Armed Forces Recreation Center Berchtesgaden. Generations of U.S. military personnel and their families enjoyed low-cost alpine vacations at that facility. As a U.S. Army physician, I attended military medical conferences there from 1987 to 1994. It was quite eerie to gaze around the old-fashioned dining room at mealtimes, imagining Nazi bigwigs feeding there fifty years before, possibly using the same clunky wooden furniture.

A short walk down the road, a small shop sold postcards depicting the buildings of the Obersalzberg complex as they appeared before and after the bombardment and demolitions, and a book detailing the history of the complex. Using the

maps in this book, it was easy to locate not only Hitler's Berghof but the ruins of the villas belonging to Hermann Göring, Martin Bormann, and others.

Among the services offered by the AFRC Berchtesgaden staff was a memorable guided tour of the complex of underground bunkers and tunnels linking the various structures on the Obersalzberg. These seemed to go on forever, but the guides informed us that the greater part of the underground maze was off limits, including the still furnished private shelters of the prominent Nazi officials.

*William Peterson
Hanau, Germany*

Timothy Ryback replies:

In his diary entry Harley Wilbur quite correctly notes that the "Kehlstein House" was known as the "tea house" by the Nazis, and later as the "Eagle's Nest" by the Americans. This stone structure perched on a knife-edged cliff, known as the Kehlstein, was indeed accessed by a breath-stopping drive along a series of hairpin curves, followed by a ride up an elevator shaft hewn through solid rock.

Wilbur is mistaken, however, in assuming that the Kehlstein House was the same structure as the Berghof. The house was a "present" given to Hitler by the Nazi Party in 1939, on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday. Hitler was not especially fond of it, and visited it only a dozen or so times. In contrast, the Berghof—Hitler's private residence, which sat on a grassy slope a thousand feet below—was one of the places where, as I noted, he spent some of his most pleasant times and conceived his "great ideas." In 1965, when Wilbur visited the Obersalzberg, the Berghof was little more than a heap of rubble, obscured in a stand of trees—as it still is today, with no sign or marker to indicate its historic significance.

Many of the structures that William Peterson saw during his visits to the Obersalzberg have been obliterated, including the ruins of Göring's and Bormann's houses and the hotel in which he stayed. Most of the underground structures that he toured are still intact but have been closed to the public. However, I strongly doubt that the "private shelters" of prominent Nazis were still furnished at that time, as he suggests.

Prison Scenes

As commissioner of correction for the City of New York, I was delighted to be able to facilitate Bernard-Henri Lévy's visit to Rikers Island ("In the Footsteps of Tocqueville," May *Atlantic*). Unfortunately, upon reading his article I was appalled by its condescension, racism, and outright lies.

Mark Cranston, a member of my staff, accompanied Lévy every step of his visit. He writes to me that the scene described by Lévy of a Hispanic man, hand on his ear, streaming blood, never occurred. Lévy may have been told by staff about the ritual of the "Rikers cut," but his claim to have seen it is absolutely false. Also false is his claim to have seen a "bearded, naked giant" masturbating in front of a female guard. That is a lie. It simply did not occur while he was there.

We do not segregate prisoners by race, or any other way except by security level. That Lévy saw two inmates of the same race together in a holding cell during a visit of less than three hours is insufficient basis for his innuendo. He never asked if we had such a policy, and we don't.

Lévy compares Rikers Island to a "war zone." That is not borne out by the facts. Stabbings and slashings of inmates may once have been frequent, but last year, with more than 60,000 individuals passing through our jails, only forty such incidents occurred. New York City's jails are among the safest in the world.

Finally, I must comment on Lévy's seeming obsession with describing the race of my staff. What is his point? Does it reflect his own discomfort? New York is the most diverse city in the world, and we are proud of it. Our staff reflects that diversity.

*Martin F. Horn
Department of Correction
New York, N.Y.*

Bernard-Henri Lévy replies:

The visitor shouldn't hold it against his guides that they were assigned the duty of providing a flattering impression of Rikers Island. They did what they could, but their zeal could do nothing to alter certain realities. It could do nothing to alter the fact that the majority not of guards but of

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for not wearing shoes all week.

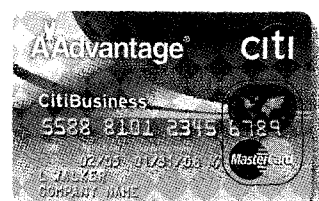
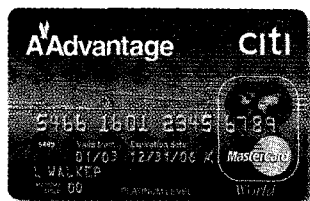


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detainees are black; it could do nothing to attenuate the atmosphere of dull violence that I subsequently found in a number of other American prisons and that, at any rate, dominated this one. As for the details of my account, I stand by what I wrote. And I would note, by the way, that Mr. Cranston was not always present during my visit (and that is an understatement). Finally, regarding the masturbation scene, which I am well aware was not part of the planned visit—pas de chance!—I caught a sequence of it, as I did of other aspects of prison life, on my little pocket video camera.

On Publishing Fiction

How sad that *The Atlantic*, historic nurturer of fiction, is abandoning it. William Dean Howells and his successors are fuming in their graves. Writers like Sue Miller and Louise Erdrich, who saw their early stories published in the magazine, are no doubt saddened. Subscribers like me, who'll have to go to a newsstand to buy your scrap from the fiction table, the "extra" August issue, are outraged. In a journal stuffed with fact-based pieces, is there really no room for a single work of fiction?

Dan Cryer
 New York, N.Y.

Fiction (like any art form) works in conjunction with the culture that produces it—the culture that responds to it and shapes it. Positioning a select work of fiction in the midst of the other kinds of reportage and human-interest features helps create a cultural context in a way that omitting that material does not. I hope you reconsider.

Patricia Kozma
 Fairfield, Conn.

The short stories in the magazine were half the reason for my subscription, and I doubt I will renew now that they will no longer appear. Your magazine already offers in-depth reporting. Without the short stories, the beautiful balance that they provided between the world of hard fact and the world of imagination is gone.

Susan Ballinger
 Montreal, Quebec

A Matter of Degree

I was enjoying B. R. Myers's "A Bag of Tired Tricks" (May *Atlantic*) until I reached his critique of a passage from Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* that Myers finds especially annoying: "Young boys are too sensible to write in such a fashion; that sort of thing comes with age, and an M.F.A." Talk about a used-up convention. Invoking the master of fine arts degree as a synonym for, or cause of, all things precious, pretentious, or even tidy in contemporary fiction has become a book-reviewing cliché, an anti-establishment tic empty of any real meaning. Books are good or bad or in-between no matter whether their writers went to school, where they went, or what degree they earned. There is no evidence in any easily obtainable biographical note that Foer even has an M.F.A., making Myers's slap all the more gratuitous.

Josh Russell
 Newnan, Ga.

B. R. Myers replies:

My point was that Oskar sounds like an adult with an M.F.A. This was no "slap" at Foer, a philosophy major, but rather a criticism of the text itself. If Oskar spoke legalese, I would have complained that he sounded like a lawyer—and would no doubt have been taken to task for denigrating lawyers. The similarity in prose and background of some prominent writers has indeed led many people, including me, to associate M.F.A. graduates with a certain style. Josh Russell is welcome to set us straight, but he'll have to do better than argue that a point made often is ipso facto an empty one.

John Brown's Motives

Christopher Hitchens's review of David S. Reynolds's biography of John Brown ("The Man Who Ended Slavery," May *Atlantic*) contained a significant inaccuracy. Hitchens wrote, "After the murder of the abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy, and especially after the famous assault on Senator Charles Sumner by Representative Preston Brooks, Brown decided on a reprisal raid and slew several leading pro-slavery Kansans in the dead of the night."

In fact Lovejoy was killed on November 7, 1837, in Illinois, so his death could not have been the immediate cause of Brown's Pottawatomie Creek Massacre, which took place in Kansas on May 24, 1856, almost nineteen years later.

Also, the caning of Senator Sumner by Brooks took place on May 22, 1856. Given the state of communications at the time, it is highly unlikely that Brown knew of that assault when he killed five men two days later. Historians agree that to the extent that the Pottawatomie Creek Massacre had any rational motive, it was to avenge the "Sack of Lawrence," on May 21, 1856, near Brown's home. A pro-slavery force had looted the town of Lawrence but had not killed anyone.

It is a stretch to describe the five victims of the massacre as "leading pro-slavery Kansans." They appear to have been selected more or less at random, and Brown's principal target was not even there that night. Two of the victims, William and Drury Doyle, were young men who were not leaders of anything.

Kevin Sweeney
Mt. Vernon, Ill.

Christopher Hitchens replies:

I trusted the reader in my compression of the long train of oppressions and usurpations that stretched from Lovejoy to Lawrence, Kansas. As for the Brooks-Sumner affair, two of John Brown's sons, Jason and Salmon, separately recalled their father's receiving the tidings as his wagon began to roll away from his camp. A messenger, identified by Salmon as a man named Gardner, galloped up with the news from Washington—which, Salmon continued, made his father furious: "It seemed to be the finishing, decisive touch." Reynolds joins two earlier biographers, Villard and Oates, in regarding this story as plausible if not certain. Brown had certainly decided on reprisals in any case, but of the influence of the news concerning the assault on Sumner we may say at the very least, "Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon."

Advice & Consent

Christopher Hitchens ("On Becoming American," May *Atlantic*) mentions his pride that his offspring are Americans just by virtue of being born

in the United States, and says that no other country is or ever has been this generous in awarding citizenship. This is not so. Canada awards citizenship automatically to any child born in the country, and a quick search on the Internet suggests that France, Ireland, and Panama do the same.

Wayne McNulty
Wellington, Ont.

Cullen Murphy's piece about frauds, fakes, and forgeries ("Knock It Off," December 2004 *Atlantic*) brings to mind the Hoosier poet James Whitcomb Riley's youthful (and bungled) knockoff of Edgar Allan Poe.

According to *American Authors, 1600–1900*, Riley, who was then a fledgling journalist on the *Democrat* of Anderson, Indiana, "perpetrated his famous 'Leonainie' hoax in an attempt to prove that a poem could cause a sensation if it purported to be the newly-discovered work of 'a genius known to fame.'" Some critics were fooled, and attributed the poem to Poe, but when experts demanded to see the original manuscript, Riley's little game dissolved. His employer was not amused, and Riley was sacked.

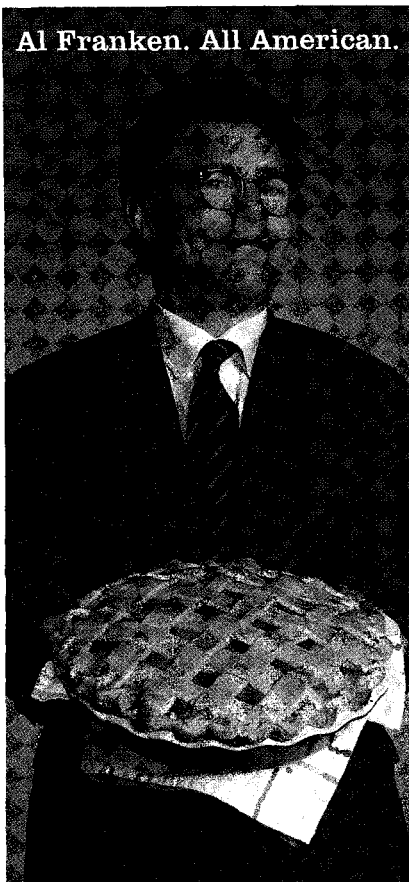
He was eventually hired by the *Indianapolis Journal*, where his down-home country poems, including "When the Frost is on the Punkin" and "The Old Swimmin' Hole," earned him fame and the public's love and admiration.

Thomas W. Kemp
Boca Raton, Fla.

Editor's Note

*A sentence in Lawrence E. Harrison's letter to the editor (June *Atlantic*) was inadvertently rendered incorrect in the editing process. His original sentence read, "The democratic institutions installed by the United States soon started to unravel after the Marines left the Dominican Republic in 1924, and Rafael Leonidas Trujillo assumed dictatorial powers in 1930 that would last for more than three decades, leading to another U.S. military intervention in 1965." In addition, a typographical error caused the word "trust" to be substituted for "truth" in Mr. Harrison's quotation from Tocqueville.*

We regret the errors.



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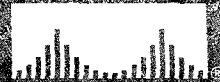
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COMMENT

The New Nixon

It'll be George W. Bush, if he doesn't change his economic policies soon

BY JONATHAN RAUCH

If you are worried about the federal deficit (and you should be), ask yourself which would do more to improve the country's finances—President Bush's latest budget or a pastrami sandwich. The administration made much of the fact that the budget Bush proposed in February was his tightest yet and was projected to reduce the deficit by half, to \$207 billion, in 2010. What the administration did not make much of—you had to look deep in the fine print—is that the deficit would actually decline a bit more between now and 2010 if the Bush plan were *not* enacted and existing laws were just left alone.

In other words, go with the pastrami. It is fiscally sounder, plus it's good with mustard and a dill pickle.

Bush is a risk taker, and nowhere is his audacity more pronounced than in his willingness to tolerate large deficits in order to achieve other aims. He came to office looking at a budget surplus of \$5.6 trillion over ten years, and converted it into deficits that will amount to something like \$2.6 trillion over those ten years. However one feels about this, it was one of the largest fiscal dislocations in modern American history.

How should one feel about it? Not happy, of course. Enormous deficits pose significant risks. As many economists see it, the economy's main long-term vulnerability is the combination of negative government saving—that is, deficits—and low private saving, which together make the United States dependent on foreign capital. Eventually the imbalance will have to be corrected, and as James Fallows shows elsewhere in this issue, an abrupt correction could be depressing in both the economic and emotional senses of the word.

Yet some risks are worth taking. There are worse things in life than deficits. One way to evaluate Bush's policies is by asking which president he will end up most closely resembling—Ronald Reagan or Richard Nixon.

In the half century before Bush, the United States had already experienced two great fiscal dislocations. The second and better known occurred during the early 1980s, when Reagan raised defense spending and cut taxes. The deficit soon reached six percent of GDP, a level since unmatched. Good-government types—I confess I was one of them—decried Reagan's deficits as the height of recklessness. Then the Soviet Union collapsed. Many people, and not just Reaganites,

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have plausibly argued that Reagan's defense buildup played a leading role in pushing the Soviet regime over the edge. If that's true, then in hindsight the Reagan deficits look like money well spent.

Where deficit spending is concerned, Bush outdoes Reagan. He nearly doubled the Department of Education's budget, approved an expansion of Medicare that added \$17 trillion to the program's already staggering (\$45 trillion) unfunded liability, and has spent more than \$200 billion on Iraq and Afghanistan and other elements of the war on terror.

Of course, Bush and other Republicans argue that they are investing, not just spending. They will tell you the education money bought a national regime of testing and standards that will improve American schools. They say the Medicare spending bought some structural innovations—notably personal health savings accounts—that could lay the groundwork for a more rational, market-oriented health-care system. Yes, the Iraq War and its aftermath are expensive (and money is the least of it); but the administration hopes to buy a new, more democratic social order in the Arab world.

Critics of Bush's aggressive first-term tax cutting may be forgetting how perilous the economic situation was during his first couple of years in office. The U.S. economy might have contracted severely in the wake of the dot-com bust and 9/11, and could have dragged much of the world down with it. Instead it slowed but, remarkably, never stopped growing—partly because aggressive tax cutting helped sustain consumption. It may be true, as some have complained, that smaller or temporary tax cuts would have sufficed, but that sort of second-guessing is a luxury possible only after a potential crisis has passed. "One way you can characterize the decision-making was, Avoid the extreme downside at all costs, and you can go back later and pick up the pieces," Douglas Holtz-Eakin, the director of the Congressional Budget Office, told me.

In sum, Bush and his advisers believe they have used deficits to solve bigger problems. They expect that Bush will look like Reagan. They may

be right. Then again, he may end up looking like Nixon.

Nixon was responsible for the other great fiscal dislocation. Intent on buying popularity, he watered and grew the Great Society programs that Lyndon Johnson had seeded, and he increased entitlement spending by a startling four percent of GDP. Nixon left behind a chronic deficit in the range of two to four percent of GDP—roughly the same as today's. Coping with his fiscal dislocation would be the job of every president from Ford to Clinton.

Nixon's fiscal gambles differ from Reagan's in two important respects. First, Reagan changed course. When the deficit became alarming, he acceded (reluctantly, to be sure) to tax increases and defense cuts. He stopped making a bad situation worse, and he left the deficit, as a share of GDP, only slightly higher than he found it. Second, Reagan arguably got a geopolitical transformation in exchange for his fiscal rupture. Nixon got a permanent entitlement crisis, a twenty-year budget crisis, high inflation, and a reputation for opportunism.

So how will Bush look? The answer depends less on what happened in his first term than on what happens in his second. Bush's first-term deficits were defensible as responses to emergencies, but the emergencies are over; and the strategy of avoiding the extreme downside and picking up the pieces later works only if you do pick up the pieces later. That would involve cutting spending more deeply than Bush has yet proposed, revoking some of his tax cuts or reforming the tax system in ways that generate new revenues, and, at the very least, paying for his initiatives. So far he has shown little inclination to do any of those things; in fact, he wants to make the tax cuts permanent.

"The lady's not for turning," Margaret Thatcher once famously said. Resolve is a good thing in politics—up to a point. If Bush wants to take the road to Reagan's legacy instead of to Nixon's, the moment to turn is any time now. ▀

Jonathan Rauch is an Atlantic correspondent. His columns for National Journal won a National Magazine Award this year.



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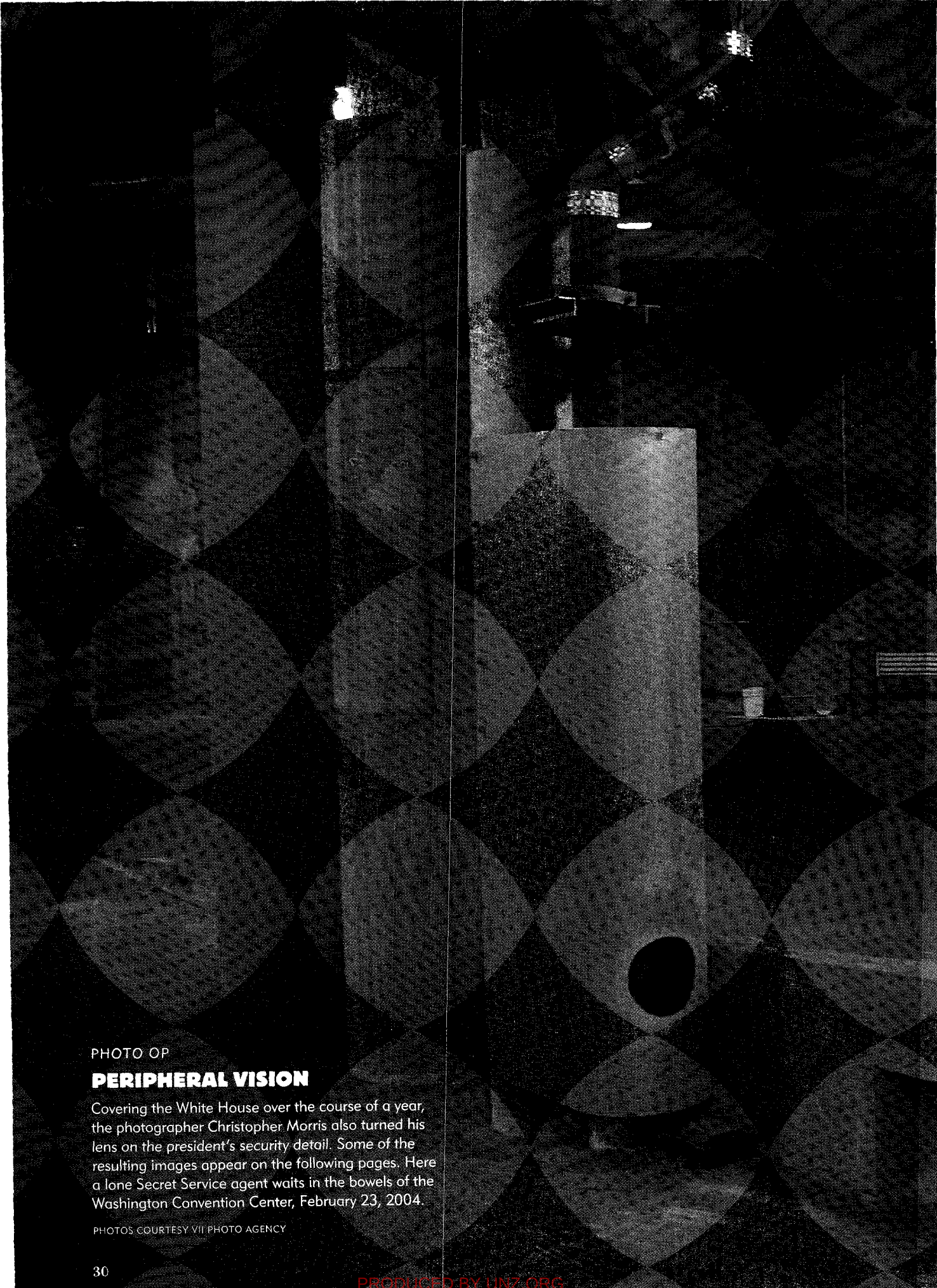


PHOTO OP

PERIPHERAL VISION

Covering the White House over the course of a year, the photographer Christopher Morris also turned his lens on the president's security detail. Some of the resulting images appear on the following pages. Here a lone Secret Service agent waits in the bowels of the Washington Convention Center, February 23, 2004.

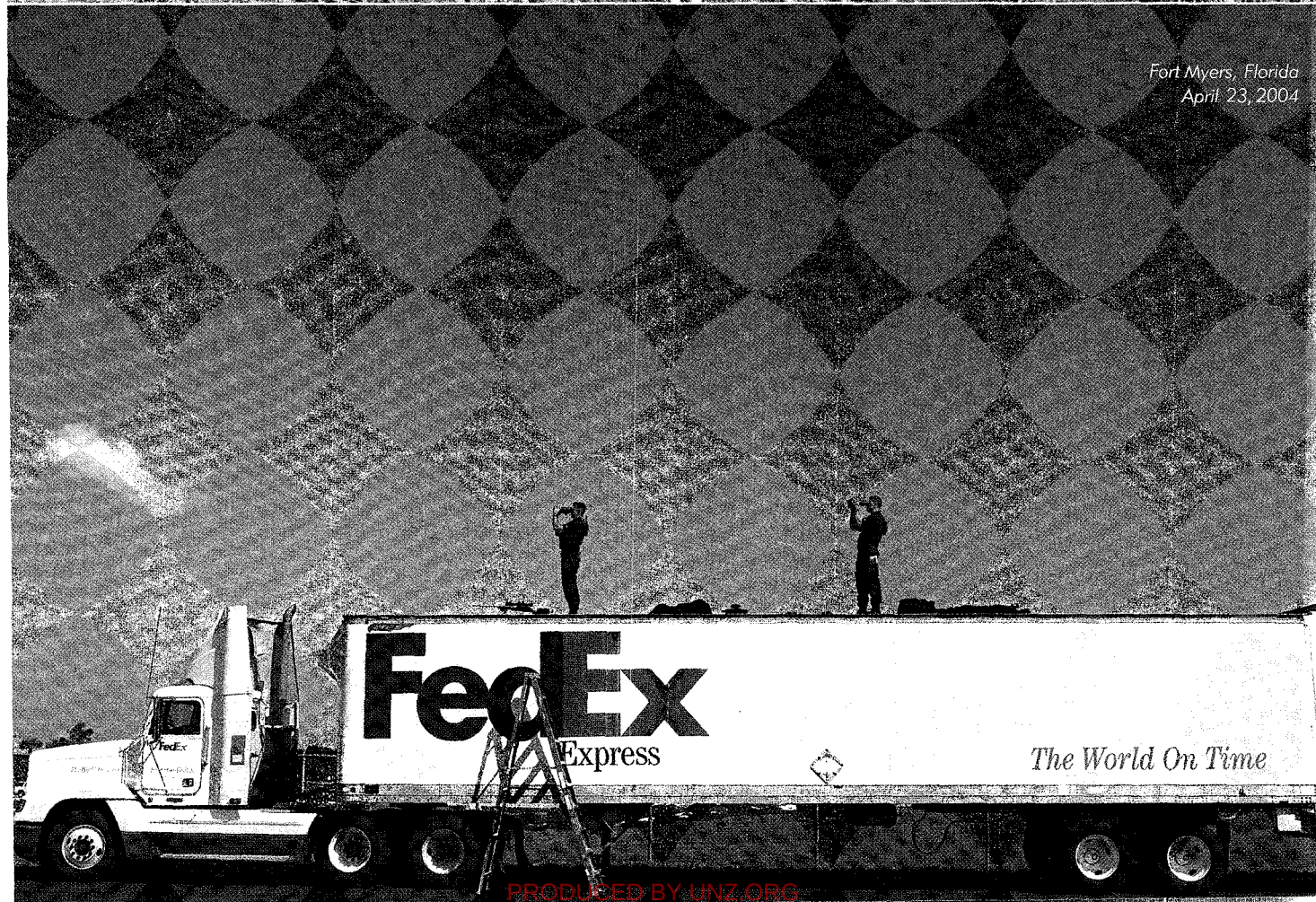
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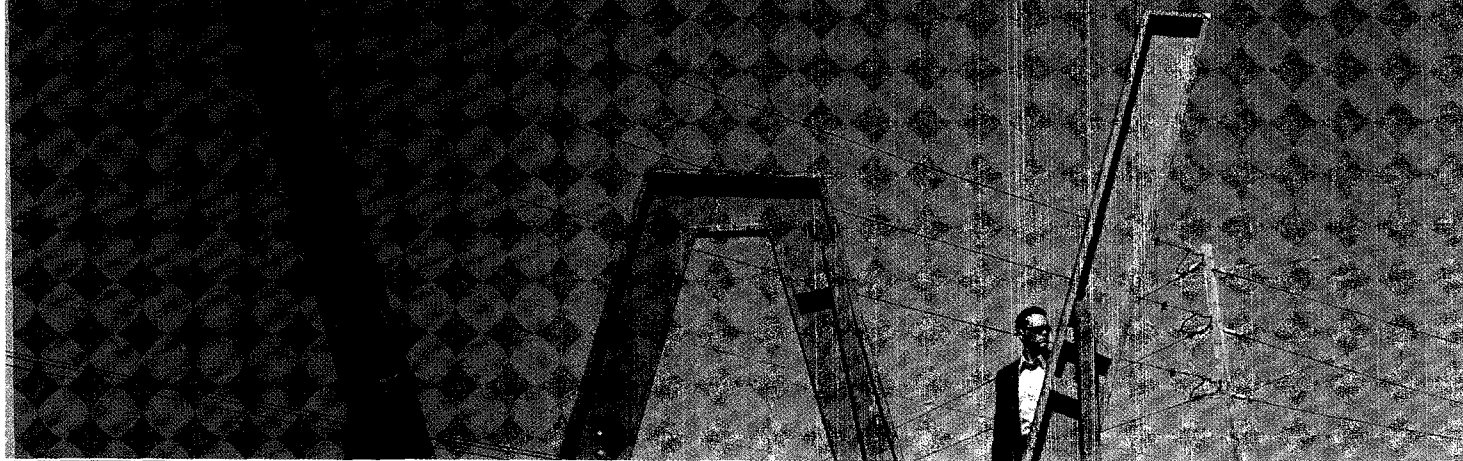
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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Wrong Lesson

Our counterinsurgency efforts abroad are starting to resemble the British Empire's. This could mean gains now—and trouble later

BY CAROLINE ELKINS

In an influential article that appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle* in September of 2003, John Arquilla, a professor of defense analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, urged the United States to look carefully at British imperial counterinsurgency efforts in 1950s Kenya. There, Arquilla argued, was a model the Bush administration could learn from in its efforts to fight insurgents in Iraq and terrorists around the world. In Kenya, he observed, the British, under the leadership of General Sir Frank Kitson, undertook a successful campaign against Mau Mau insurgents who were fighting for independence from Britain. Some 20,000 Africans had taken to Kenya's remote forests, where they waged a protracted guerrilla war. Arquilla wrote,

When conventional military operations and bombing failed to defeat the Mau Mau insurgency in Kenya in the 1950s, the British formed teams of friendly Kikuyu tribesmen who went about pretending to be terrorists. These "pseudo gangs," as they were called, swiftly threw the Mau Mau on the defensive, either by befriending and then ambushing bands of fighters or by guiding bombers to the terrorists' camps. What worked in Kenya a half-century ago has a wonderful chance of undermining trust and recruitment among today's terror networks. Forming new pseudo gangs should not be difficult.

Kitson's pseudo-gangs were a key element of the "low-intensity operations" that were deployed throughout the British Empire in the waning days of colonial rule. Starting in the early 1950s, Kitson spent three decades moving from Malaya (now Malaysia) to Kenya to Cyprus to Oman to Northern Ireland, acquiring strategic knowledge and adapting his policies to local circumstances. His counterinsurgency program rippled even further, touching nearly every corner of the world where Britain had imperial and

strategic interests. Many hold that Kitson and the British established the gold standard for disengaging from imperial occupation and defusing some international threats—that they dealt efficiently with local terrorists and at the same time managed to leave behind enduring institutions and laws that would help ensure democratic futures.

But are pseudo-gangs really the best model for the United States in its global war on terror, or in its ongoing battle against Sunni insurgents in Iraq? Not necessarily; and besides, Arquilla's thinking rests on a flawed historical analogy. For one thing, pseudo-gangs could not have succeeded without more severe and overarching measures of control by the British—in fact, police-state control. In addition to targeting insurgents directly, the British targeted civilian populations, which often illicitly supported insurgents and harbored critical intelligence. Through measures including collective punishment, fines and curfews, detention without trial, expanded capital punishment, censorship, and restrictions on movement, British forces sought to intimidate civilians, separate them from insurgents, and collect the intelligence necessary to infiltrate terrorist networks. In Kenya they broke civilian support by systematizing torture, inflicting heavy civilian casualties, and detaining nearly 1.5 million Africans thought to be sympathetic to the Mau Mau.

The British adopted similar policies in Cyprus at about the same time, creating "Q patrols" to help suppress Greek Cypriot insurgents who demanded unification with Greece. The Q patrols worked alongside security forces, snatch squads, and interrogation teams that earned the nickname "HMTs," or "Her Majesty's Torturers." Like the pseudo-gangs in Kenya, they operated with a free hand in a police state.

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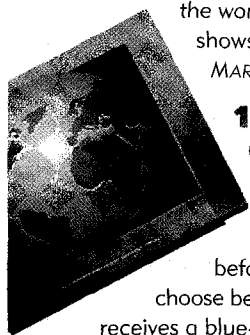
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LOCAL REALITIES

This past spring Fox Cable Networks announced the debut of Fox Reality—a television network with a mission to provide reality programming twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, to more than six million American homes. Fox Reality is no pioneer: it is the third all-reality channel either in the works or already available in the United States, following Reality 24-7 and Reality TV.

But reality TV, of course, is not an exclusively American phenomenon. India and other parts of Asia have had 24/7 access to it since 2003, and homegrown reality shows—often distinctly local in flavor—have become popular around the world. Here are five recent shows. —ABIGAIL CUTLER & MARSHALL POE



1. Human Resources

(Argentina): Two unemployed contestants compete in a series of interviews and tests

before facing the viewers, who choose between them. The winner receives a blue-collar job; the runner-up gets six months of health insurance.

2. Terrorism in the Grip of Justice (Iraq):

Imprisoned terrorist suspects confess to the camera, discuss their motives (usually financial), and sometimes face the families of their victims. The show airs six nights a week on a state-run network.

3. Sperm Race (Germany):

Samples of the contestants' frozen sperm are sent to a studio in Cologne, where they are placed in a petri dish and raced toward an egg. The winner receives a red Porsche and the title "Germany's Most Virile Man." "Sperm Race is serious," Boris Brandt, the show's producer, told a German newspaper. "Fertility is a big thing in Germany."

4. The Ambassador (Israel):

Fourteen young Israelis compete to bolster Israel's international image. Challenges include defending Israel at Cambridge University and selling Israeli vacation packages in Paris. The last attaché standing receives a one-year job as a spokesperson for Israel with a PR firm in New York.

5. Spets (Russia): Produced by the real-life mobster Vitali "Spets" Dyomochka, who was irked by TV depictions of organized crime in Russia, the seven-part series portrays mafia life in Ussurisk, a city near Vladivostok. The gangsters play themselves.

Nearly two decades later, to protect their interests in the Middle East, the British directed counterinsurgency operations in Oman. The British Army Training Team raised *firgats*—the Omani version of pseudo-gangs—by enlisting surrendered or defected rebels, and gave them carte blanche in their efforts to penetrate rebel networks. Here, too, Britain employed harsh policies, such as poisoning wells and cutting off food supplies. (Significantly, in Northern Ireland, where British forces could not resort to such extreme measures, their success in breaking down terrorist networks was limited.)

The Bush administration has already begun to adopt similar counterinsurgency strategies. It has detained suspected al-Qaeda members without trial in Guantánamo and conducted widespread civilian searches in Iraq; and in November of 2003 news broke that the Pentagon had assembled a Special Operations task force charged with capturing or assassinating Baathist insurgents. (Its mission has since expanded, and it is now operating in Afghanistan as well.) According to the investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, overseeing the "manhunting" plan are two of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's closest advisers: Stephen Cambone, the undersecretary of defense for intelligence, and Cambone's military assistant, Lieutenant General William Boykin.

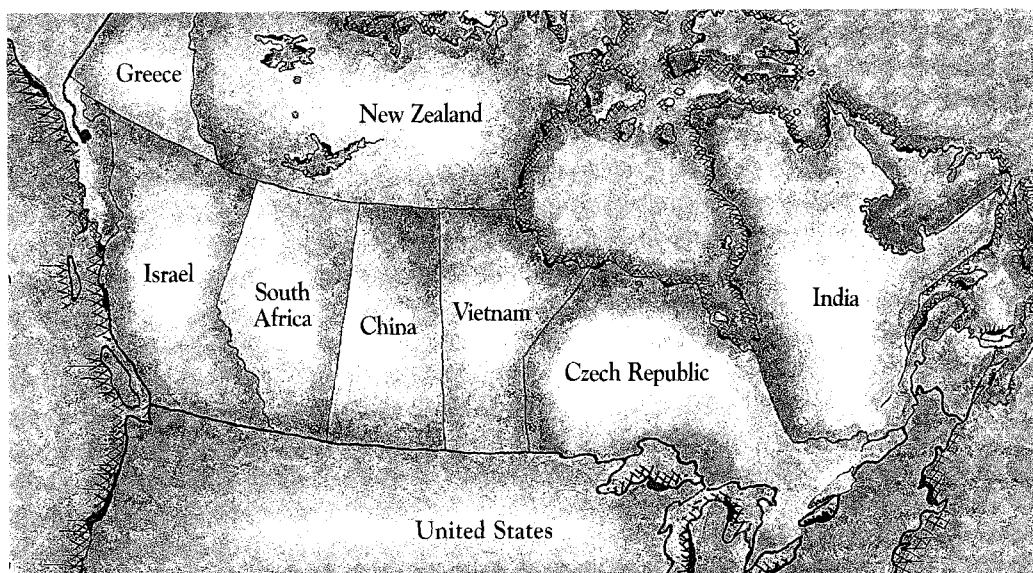
Like their earlier British counterparts, the members of this task force are dependent on local intelligence networks. Former members of the Iraqi intelligence service have become coalition supporters and have provided crucial information; but observers have voiced fears that some of these newfound Iraqi allies, like loyalists in the British operations, may use their positions to settle private grievances and line their own pockets. Still, the United States has reportedly begun to move forward with similar operations in its fight against terrorism elsewhere in the world.

Militarily, the Bush strategists may be on to something. If Britain's past successes are anything to judge by, American low-intensity operations could help win the war on terror—at least in

the short term. But Britain's long-term strategies seem hardly appropriate for contemporary American foreign policy—and the administration's readiness to mimic this sort of model should give us serious pause. There is this inconvenient fact: Throughout Britain's former empire, twentieth-century colonial rule and the suppression of terrorists—some of whom might more properly be called nationalists—inscribed a legacy of violence on the governments established in Britain's wake. As Somchai Homlaor, the secretary general of Forum-Asia, a leading human-rights organization, has put it, "Internal-security laws and anti-terrorist laws are a draconian remnant of the laws employed during the colonial era." Indeed, advisers from Britain's Colonial Office, who oversaw the crafting of police states throughout the empire, had a hand in drafting the new constitutions and legal systems that institutionalized coercion and political subjugation in Britain's former colonial states. In the final accounting, repressive laws and undemocratic institutions, not peace and progress, are the primary bequest of the British to their onetime empire.

A few examples. Britain's strategy in Cyprus during the insurgency of the 1950s engendered open Cypriot hostilities that persisted; violent clashes often erupted as Greek and Turkish Cypriots sought to annex part or all of the island for their respective countries. Malaysia experienced convulsive violence in the years after independence, culminating in a state of emergency from 1969 to 1971; the Malaysian government's crackdown on dissent, which included suspending due process and freedom of the press, took its cues from British repression. Malaysians still live under an Internal Security Act that was adapted from Britain's emergency regulations of the late 1940s; it allows for preventive—and indefinite—detention without trial. Since independence thousands of people, including the former deputy prime minister, have been rounded up and detained. And in Guyana, where Britain suspended the constitution and instituted a state of emergency in 1953, the independent regime of Forbes Burnham implemented arbitrary measures and legal

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Sources: U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing, "Drug Importation," 108th Congress, 2nd Session, July 14, 2004; Information available at www.canadarx.com/canadaRXorderform. Accessed September 9, 2004. U.S. Senate. Hearing before the Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions. "Importation of Prescription Drugs," 108th Congress, 2nd Session, May 20, 2004. "Prescription Trips." Newsday. September 19, 2004.

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HILLARY IN 2008?

James A. Barnes and Peter Bell, reporters for *National Journal*, regularly poll more than a hundred political insiders—selected for their campaign experience, political knowledge, and ties to key voting blocs. Recently, for *The Atlantic*, they asked about the presidential prospects of Hillary Clinton.



1 If she runs, will Hillary Clinton win the Democratic presidential nomination?

DEMOCRATS: YES (49 votes)

"If Hillary runs, Hillary wins—simple as that. She's doing all the right things, going to all the right states, building up political chits, and steering for the middle."

"She has been tested more times than Jose Canseco. I would never underestimate her."

"She is beloved in the party from the grass roots to K Street. It would take a cataclysmic failure on her part to lose the nomination."

DEMOCRATS: NO (14 votes)

"She has the money, but even among Democrats she is too much of a polarizing figure. Those of us in D.C. need to spend more time with Democrats in Iowa to understand."

REPUBLICANS: YES (48 votes)

"How can Hillary walk away from history? She is a shoo-in for the nomination and at least fifty-fifty for the general election. Name me someone else who would not run under those circumstances."

"She's going to start with the same type of financial and institutional advantage that Bush had in 2000. That means she can survive a few slip-ups that would finish off her opponents."

REPUBLICANS: NO (8 votes)

"I find it inconceivable that Democrats will land on a candidate as liberal and polarizing as Hillary. She will start as the front-runner, but the real winner will come from those candidates who consistently finish second or third in the early contests."

2 What would be the most difficult obstacle for her to overcome as a candidate in the general election? (Pick just one.)

DEMOCRATS:

- a) Clinton fatigue (11 votes)
- b) She seems too liberal (11 votes)
- c) Her gender (9 votes)
- d) Lacks foreign-policy cred (0 votes)
- e) Her persona (28 votes)

"Hillary is too much of an established and polarizing personality. The only two Republicans Clinton could defeat are Tom DeLay and Newt Gingrich."

"By 2008 Hillary may have enough time to remake herself—America has a very short memory—but if not, her persona hurts her. Mean, enabling, and in denial are not normally traits we like to see in our presidential candidates."

"The Republicans will go to old playbook and try to portray her as a weak-kneed liberal. But Hillary is smarter than that. Look for some Sister Souljah moments."

"She's got most of Bill's negatives without his personality. People want the Clinton brain and heart."

REPUBLICANS:

- a) Clinton fatigue (7 votes)
- b) She seems too liberal (23 votes)
- c) Her gender (4 votes)
- d) Lacks foreign-policy cred (0 votes)
- e) Her persona (16 votes)

"She has done a fairly good job of positioning herself as more of a centrist in terms of the media and political elites, but every other American knows she is the left's great hope."

"Hillary's liberalism can be addressed and corrected—that's a work already in progress. But her brusque manner irritates millions; it's more difficult to hide personality in a long campaign."

"She's still too sanctimonious, particularly when someone gets under her skin. If one of the debates gets tough, she'll turn into Bob Dole in drag."

"Her gender [is her biggest obstacle]: I know that's not 21st-century, but most of the country isn't there yet either."

structures similar to those that underwrote this colonial repression.

The independence leaders Jomo Kenyatta, of Kenya, and Hastings Banda, of Malawi, also used British methods to suppress opposition and to divide rather than unite new nations. Their governments, like many others in the former empire, adopted British regulations, penal institutions, policing policies, and military tactics with little alteration. Kenya's Preservation of Public Security Act—a near replica of British post-emergency legislation—enabled the harassment, detention, torture, and murder of hundreds of opposition members, first under Kenyatta and then under his successor, Daniel T. arap Moi. In Malawi laws similarly rooted in British colonial precedent gave Banda powers to eliminate dissent. And like the British, Banda wielded these powers liberally, overseeing not just detentions without trial but torture and extrajudicial killings.

Britain's legacy was not limited to institutions and laws; members of local populations who sided with the British in counterinsurgency operations often helped institute repressive measures both while the British were in power and after they were gone. Rather than providing the backbone of a civil society, these former loyalists helped ensure its failure.

Not coincidentally, the Bush administration's war on terror is being waged in some of the same regions of the world. During her Senate confirmation testimony Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice served up one of the latest slogans in this war, calling Iran, Zimbabwe, Cuba, North Korea, Belarus, and Myanmar the "outposts of tyranny." One of her responsibilities will presumably be to defend the practices—the detentions in Guantánamo, the commando and death squads in Iraq and elsewhere—that a strategy of low-intensity operations requires. But if history offers any lesson here, it may be that the real "outposts of tyranny" are the institutions left behind by the colonial and military strategists in Britain's twentieth-century empire. ▀

Caroline Elkins is an associate professor of history at Harvard University and the author of Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya.

A full listing of poll participants and results can be found at www.theatlantic.com/hillarypoll.

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The Show-Me Sheikh

The grand mufti of Egypt, Ali Gomaa, is peddling a new kind of radical Islam—traditionalism without the extremism

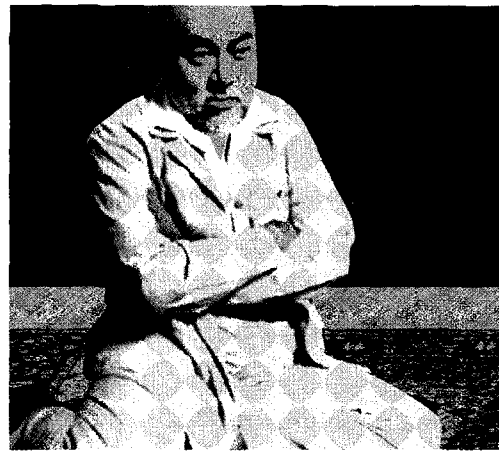
BY G. WILLOW WILSON

On the night of December 30, 2004, the streets of downtown Cairo were unusually crowded. Government police officers, conspicuous in white gaiters, stood at attention outside a mosque, diverting traffic into a single congested lane. The police were on hand not to keep people out but to hem the mosque's occupants in. The speaker that evening was Mohammad Hassen, one of Cairo's most inflammatory sheikhs. President Hosni Mubarak's administration, anxious to allay fears of growing extremism after the October bombings in Sinai, was not taking any chances. Hassen and his followers had been known to advocate violence against Israel in the past.

That evening, however, the mood of the hard-line Islamic community was defensive, not aggressive. Earlier that day, in an appearance on Egyptian national television, Ali Gomaa, the grand mufti of Egypt and one of the highest-ranking clerics in the Sunni Muslim world, had denounced what the West refers to as fundamentalism. Although many Muslim leaders have stepped forward to condemn terrorist violence in recent years, no one before had even implicitly attacked the philosophy, often known as Wahhabism, that is thought to give rise to it—in no small part because Wahhabism is the official doctrine of Saudi Arabia, which controls the holy city of Mecca. But Gomaa did so, and went further: he referred to the extremists as *khawerig*, or “outsiders”—persons who fail to follow true Islamic law. Historically the term has been attached to the early Islamic dissidents who murdered Imam Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad. In Arab Islamic society it is traditionally taboo to criticize the lifestyle or personal philosophy of any practicing Muslim. Never before had such a respected Islamic scholar and sheikh—much less the religious leader of the most popu-

lous Arab nation—laid bare the division between practicing fundamentalists and the rest of the Muslim *umma*, or religious community. In a region where extremist sheikhs have all but silenced their moderate rivals, this was a dangerous stance to take.

For Gomaa, however, it was not an unprecedented one. Since his appoint-



ment by Mubarak, in the fall of 2004, the mufti, who is the highest religious authority among the Egyptian sheikhs, has become the most explicitly anti-extremist cleric in mainstream Sunni Islam. In his sermons he frequently refers to “sheikh lock,” a twist on a colloquialism for a narrow-minded or ignorant person. The insult is clearly aimed at Cairo's radical clerics. Sheikh lock, Gomaa says, represents an imagined Islamic past, not an attainable Islamic future. Among other things, it denies something written in the Koran and repeated in the words of the Prophet: that women are the spiritual equals of men. “Al Jeeli, one of the great thinkers of Islam, learned the Hadith [sayings of the prophet Muhammad] from fifty female sheikhs,” Gomaa said in his December television interview. “Fifty female sheikhs! And yet there are those who deny that women have equal spiritual status in Islam. This is a disgrace.”

Gomaa typically chooses to address his community face-to-face—in his office at Dar el-Iftah, the Egyptian clerical organization responsible for passing official religious rulings, or at Masgid Sultan Hassan, the medieval Cairene mosque where he delivers a sermon nearly every Friday. He also gives lectures and holds question-and-answer sessions at al-Azhar Mosque, adjacent to the University of al-Azhar, the oldest continuously operating religious school in the world. In Egypt governmental intolerance has forced extremists to confine their activities to the mosques, and it is from within the mosques that Gomaa has taken on radical Islam.

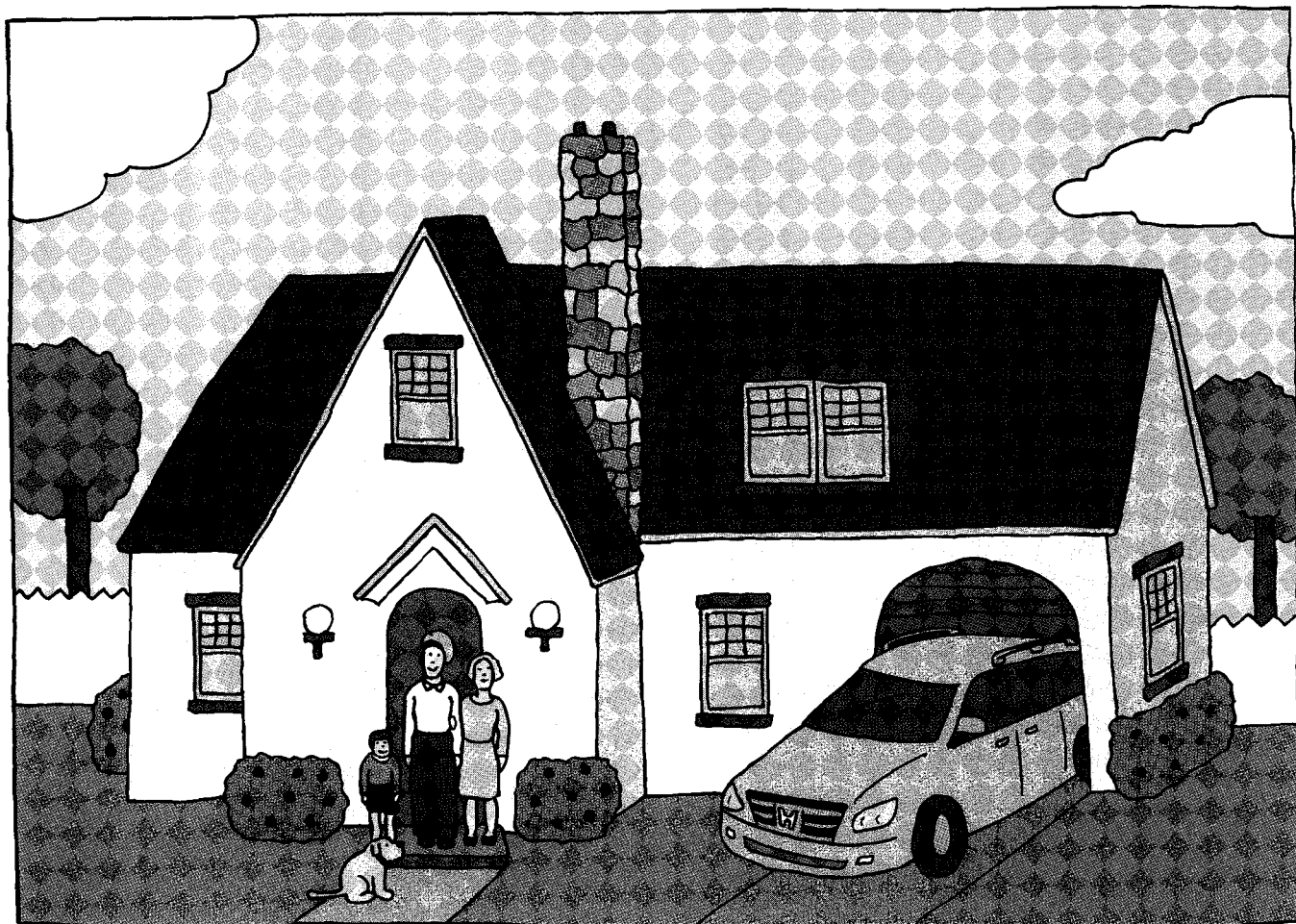
On a summer evening in 2004 a man in the crowd at one of the mufti's Q&A sessions posed a difficult question. His wife had asked for *khola*, the kind of divorce accorded to women under Egyptian law. The man didn't want the divorce—thus his problem.

“What did you do?” the mufti asked immediately. There was a ripple of laughter. The man looked confused. Could he compel his wife to stay? What action should he take?

“Set her free,” the mufti said. “You have neglected some part of your duty, and she doesn't want you anymore. That's it.”

Understandably, the man was stunned. For most inhabitants of the Arab world the prevailing cultural attitude toward women—fed and encouraged by Wahhabi doctrine, which is based on Bedouin social norms rather than Islamic jurisprudence—often trumps the rights accorded to women by Islam. Most sheikhs, out of either ignorance or a desire to preserve the status quo, support common assumptions regarding a woman's duty to stay with her husband, to cook and clean, and to raise children. But not Gomaa: a frequent command of his is “Show me.” Show me where it says in the Koran or the Sunna (prophetic tradition) that a woman is obligated to cook, or that she can't ask for a divorce. Those listening are often left speechless, because no such support exists within canonical Islamic texts.

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MARATHON MEN

President George W. Bush has done a lot to change the face of American politics. But has he changed its body type, too?

Bush is a self-professed fitness freak, always busy clearing brush at his Crawford ranch or sprinting on the White House treadmill. He appears to have spawned a new generation of politically minded endorphin junkies eager to push their physical limits as strenuously as they pursue their political careers—many of them, in fact, with an eye to replacing Bush.

Before he became president, Bush was noted for marathon running, which has quietly become the activity of choice for White House aspirants. Arkansas's Governor Mike Huckabee, a Republican, celebrated his recent loss of 110 pounds by competing in a March race in Little Rock, where he teamed up with an unlikely running mate: Iowa's Governor Tom Vilsack, a Democrat. Both men won medals for their performance and participation, but the real payoff, politically speaking, came a day later, when they appeared together on the *Today* show—the sort of media exposure that presidential hopefuls crave.

Huckabee and Vilsack hardly lead the pack. Another ambitious Democratic governor, Rod Blagojevich, of Illinois, who finished a 1984 marathon in under three hours, ran a more leisurely eleven-mile leg of an eighty-mile relay race in April. Minnesota's Governor Tim Pawlenty, a Republican, gave new meaning to the phrase "marathon campaign swing" by running two marathons last fall: the first in the Twin Cities in October, the second in New York City a month later.

Senators with presidential ambitions are hitting the trail too. The Indiana Democrat Evan Bayh, among the most talked-about potential nominees for 2008, competed in California's Big Sur Marathon this year. And can it be mere coincidence that the early Republican favorite, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, of Tennessee, is a veteran marathoner? His track record includes four Marine Corps Marathons and two New York City Marathons. Even John Kerry understands which way the wind is blowing. Kerry famously windsurfed during last year's presidential campaign, and was roundly mocked; the 2008 hopeful has claimed that he ran the Boston



Marathon in the late 1970s, according to *The Boston Globe*. But as with other episodes in the senator's past, the specifics here are a little murky; no official record of his participation exists.

For politicians, pounding the pavement seems to carry a dual benefit. Even as it relieves stress for these classic Type A personalities, it projects an appealing vitality and evokes the improvement-minded everyman—an image that connects with voters in a way that windsurfing or snowboarding might not.

Running isn't the only way to do this, of course. South Carolina's Governor Mark Sanford biked 200 miles across the Palmetto State in 2004. And the ne plus ultra of jockish politicians must surely be the former New Mexico governor Gary Johnson, who has completed the Hawaii Ironman Triathlon (2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike ride, and a marathon) and climbed Mount Everest. Take that, W! Johnson, too, views himself as a potential GOP candidate for president; and he insists that although the political fitness craze is just "smoke and mirrors" to some, he was athletically inclined long before winning office, in 1994.

But as with everything in politics, those who stray too far from tradition do so at their peril. Kerry's enthusiasm for adventure sports may have been considered curious, but the former West Virginia governor Bob Wise, a fellow Democrat, can lay claim to the most unusual athletic taste among chief executives. Wise, who holds a black belt in tae kwon do, is far better known for his clog dancing—a pursuit he once called "exhilarating, exhausting, and the best aerobic exercise around." Known as the "clogging congressman" during his time in the House of Representatives, Wise preferred clogging to riding in a car or on a float during parades.

Aerobic benefits aside, clogging has not achieved the marathon's bipartisan support. Perhaps that's because Wise, unlike Bush, did not win re-election. Or perhaps it's because, practicing his favorite exercise while campaigning for John Kerry last year in Wheeling, West Virginia, he blew out a knee. —CHRIS CILLIZZA

The mufti is also adamant about the role of the *fatwa*, or extrajudicial religious edict, in modern Islam. In the West the word conjures up Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and his *fatwa* calling for the assassination of Salman Rushdie in the 1980s; it also brings to mind a more recent case in Nigeria, in which a pregnant woman, accused of adultery after being raped, was condemned to death by stoning. To Gomaa, both represent the flagrant misuse of a long-standing tool of Islamic justice. "*Fatwa* should follow certain criteria taken from the Koran and Sunna," Gomaa told me in his office at Dar el-Iftah. "No one should be made to pay for someone else's misdeeds, because the theory of inherited sin is not present in Islam. There is an emphasis on individual responsibility. Another criterion is that a person should not harm himself or others. Also, actions should be judged by their intentions and goals, so the intention of the action in question must be good, and must be for God." He paused, and added in a graver tone, "In addition, suspicion is not a substitute for certainty. This is one of the foundations of straight thinking." This pronouncement alluded to a weighty issue: Islamic law demands that in order for someone to be convicted of adultery, four witnesses must be able to prove that they saw the accused in the act. This requirement is meant to prevent the authorities from invading a Muslim's private life without irrefutable proof of wrongdoing. However, in modern Islamic courts—many of which are presided over by sheikhs who have no working knowledge of classical Arabic, and thus only the most superficial understanding of Islamic law—this stipulation is often ignored.

Unlike many Muslim clerics, Gomaa had a secular early education. He was born in 1952, and his father was a lawyer in Cairo. Gomaa's first career interests were finance and business. "I was very influenced by my father," he said in a 2001 interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly*, a Cairo-based English-language newspaper. "I used to watch him stand up for what is right, unafraid of the powers that be. He used to address police officers and judges quite con-

Photo: Andrew Eccles

Make your mark. Join the circle.

"Women's health issues are very important to me. If I see an opportunity to help out, I'm going to get involved." Mena Suvari is proud to be a part of Circle of Friends — a growing movement supporting women who are reducing the risk of lung cancer by trying to quit smoking. That's why she wears the Circle of Friends Sunburst Charm Bracelet — to let others know that she cares about this critical women's health issue. The fact is, lung cancer kills more women every year than breast cancer and cervical cancer combined, and support makes a difference for women trying to quit smoking. Join Mena and Circle of Friends. Help someone you love quit. Visit www.join-the-circle.org or call 1-800-243-7000.



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fidently. Those were different times.” Encouraged by his parents, Gomaa studied commerce at Ain Shams University, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in 1973. After two years in the commercial world, however, he decided to pursue his passion for religious scholarship. He entered al-Azhar University as a freshman, and earned a B.A. in Islamic studies in 1979, followed by a master’s and a Ph.D. in Islamic jurisprudence. In 1988 Gomaa began work as an instructor at al-Azhar. Over the next ten years his popularity in the religious community grew steadily. His sermons, though not available on cassette tape as readily as those of his radical contemporaries, were nonetheless highly sought after, and his classes were always full.

When he became the *khatib*, or orator, of Masjid Sultan Hassan, a mosque long favored by devout Cairenes, Gomaa began to attract a following of another kind. His rational, contempo-

attempting was unique and very important,” says Hamdi Sabri, one of the mufti’s early followers. When he first met Gomaa, in the late 1980s, Sabri was a struggling young businessman, eager to take advantage of his government’s move away from socialism. Frustrated by the anti-progressive stance of the fundamentalist movement, Sabri turned to Gomaa for religious guidance. “He was struggling to present Islam in its unaltered form: simply, as the love of God.”

Gomaa was free of the Westernization that characterized the liberal sheikhs who were often targets of extremist vitriol. One such sheikh, the leader of a popular Sufi sect, was denounced as decadent and corrupt when he failed to reprimand his followers for drinking liquor and wearing revealing clothes. Gomaa’s ideas were countercultural, but his lifestyle was orthodox: he refrained from physical contact with women outside his family, encouraged abstinence before marriage

for both sexes, and could often be seen walking with his prayer beads in hand, counting them methodically. Wahhabi extremists had no choice but to keep quiet; any public criti-

cism of Gomaa would have jeopardized their credibility on the Egyptian street.

Government viziers, however, viewed him as a potential ally. Since 1982, when the Mubarak administration appointed its first grand mufti, it has habitually named liberal sheikhs in an effort to reduce the influence of fundamentalist sheikhs. Often the left-leaning edicts of Mubarak-appointed muftis conflicted with Egypt’s conservative social norms and were met with public disgust. The former grand mufti Mohammad Sayyed Tantawi, for example, famously affirmed the religious legality of a sex-change operation if the subject had been declared incurably transsexual by a licensed psychiatrist. The *fatwa* was met with bewilderment and outrage; Tantawi spent the rest of his tenure defending his reputation.

In Gomaa the Mubarak administra-

tion must have seen an opportunity to correct its course. By appointing him grand mufti, it could both appease Egypt’s increasingly restless business community and dampen the viral spread of Wahhabism in its streets. Gomaa’s moderate and inclusive religious stance made him the perfect intermediary. By keeping him close, the administration has ensured that Gomaa has remained virtually silent with regard to government policy. Thus far Mubarak’s choice has been successful: the mufti has become wildly popular. At his Friday sermons in Sultan Hassan more and more ex-Wahhabis in uncut beards and face veils can be seen gravitating toward the front of the crowd and laughing at Gomaa’s jokes, reluctant converts to moderation.

But greater tests lie ahead for the grand mufti. Many of his original followers are now successful businessmen, and their political clout is increasing. Hamdi Sabri’s company, Soft Salt, is the second largest salt manufacturer in Egypt, and another of the mufti’s early devotees is a high-ranking executive at the United Bank of Egypt. As they and others of their cadre begin to pressure the government for privatization and tax reduction, the mufti may find his position more difficult. And as anger mounts over America’s aggressive foreign policy in the Middle East, Gomaa will have to bring all his influence to bear to combat the appeal of anti-Western extremism.

For now, however, Ali Gomaa is optimistic. He feels that an informed interpretation of Islamic law is the best defense of Islam, and of its people. “*Sharia* is meant to protect Islam for Muslims, and protect the religions of all people who follow texts that proclaim the existence of God,” he says. “*Sharia* also aims to protect human dignity and human rights within the context of a global society and its stewardship of the earth. It forbids tyranny, prostitution, suicide, drug abuse—anything that reduces a human being to an object. Under all these rules and goals human beings can live out their lives, happy, safe, and at peace.” ■

G. Willow Wilson is a freelance journalist based in Cairo, Egypt. Her work has appeared in Cairo Magazine and several U.S.-based publications.

At Gomaa’s sermons more and more ex-Wahhabis in beards and face veils can be seen gravitating toward the front of the crowd, reluctant converts to moderation.

rary religious views, coupled with his background in commerce, made him appealing to a segment of Egyptian society that was fast becoming a thorn in the side of both the post-Nasserite government and the rising Islamic extremists: the religious middle class. Entrepreneurs, schoolteachers, bankers, engineers, Gomaa’s new followers were socially conservative but financially and politically progressive. They favored extended privatization and transparent governance. Most had been educated in secular institutions, but—owing to the Islamic revival that swept the Middle East in the 1980s and 1990s—many also had a working knowledge of the texts that play a central role in Islamic law: the Koran, the Sunna, and the Hadith. These people saw the growing Wahhabi movement as irrational and an impediment to material progress. “What Dr. Gomaa was

A ROLL OF THE DICE

The future of Iraq. A board game BY SPENCER ACKERMAN



Instructions: Each Iraqi faction begins the game with goodwill points—50 points each for the Shiites and Kurds, and 20 points for the Sunnis. Add and subtract goodwill points as instructed throughout the game. If the goodwill of any group reaches zero, the game ends and Iraq is sent into a downward spiral of violence and anarchy.

START

Roll die and advance number of squares indicated by roll.



Kurdish Veto

Kurds denied guarantees of autonomy. Constitution blocked; Kurdish secessionists strengthened. Subtract 15 points from each faction and return to Start.

Grand Bargain

Shiites and Kurds swap favors: sharia for Shiites, autonomy for Kurds. Add 10 points to both. Advance to next square.

Shiites and Kurds have a deal. How will Sunnis react? Roll and advance.



Sunni Veto

Sunnis make passage of constitution impossible unless it leaves them dominant. Subtract 15 points from each faction and return to Start.

CONSTITUTIONAL HAGGLING

You've made it through the constitutional process. Developing capable security forces is now the government's first priority. Advance one square to see how the government handles itself.

No-Fault Defeat

Referendum fails not because of any one faction's demands but because of accumulated "no" votes across three disparate provinces. Subtract 15 points all around and return to Start.



Sunni Acceptance

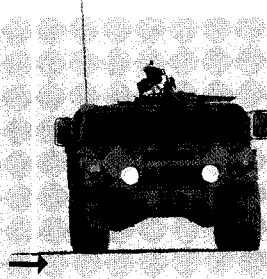
Sunni leaders satisfied that constitution secures their interests; referendum passes. Add 10 points all around and advance three squares.



HANDLING OF SECURITY

Baathist Purge?

Roll die. On 1–3, Shiite and Kurdish government fires all alleged ex-Baathists in the security and intelligence services—subtract 10 points from the Sunnis. On 4–6, Baathists stay—subtract 15 points from both the Shiites and the Kurds. Tally points, roll die, and advance.



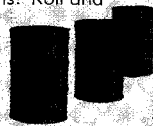
Widening Security Gap

In response to insurgency, Iraqi leaders announce that security forces will have to grow yet again. U.S. troops prepare for a protracted stay. Subtract 5 points from Shiites and Sunnis. Advance three squares.

Disintegration

Impasse over control of Kirkuk leads each faction to take matters into its own hands. Kirkuk becomes the epicenter of instability and violence. Subtract all points from all factions. Game over.

How will Iraq resolve the final status of oil-rich Kirkuk—the Kurdish "Jerusalem"—claimed by all factions? Roll and advance.



Increasing Self-Sufficiency

As insurgency diminishes, United States meets targets for Iraqi security-force training. U.S. presence drops. Add 10 points all around. Advance one square.

Shadow Security

Shiite militias bolster police and army units, but act as political enforcers. Sunnis fear retribution; subtract 5 points from them. Advance two squares.



ADMINISTRATION OF KIRKUK

Uneasy Peace—Unending Occupation
U.S. troops are asked to enforce peace on the ground, Balkans-style. Resentments rise; insurgency claims a new rationale. Subtract 5 points from all parties. Advance to Finish.



Durable Compromise
Complex agreement allows both Baghdad and Kurdistan to plausibly claim control over Kirkuk. All factions somewhat mollified. Add 10 points to all parties. Advance to Finish.

FINISH

Tally up all points. If the Kurds have 20–30 points, the Shiites have 10–20, and the Sunnis have 5–10, congratulations: Iraq is in the same netherworld as today. Anything more on all sides should suggest that Iraq is on a path toward sustainable peace and democracy. Anything less—or goodwill of zero or less for any group—and Iraq may careen toward outright civil war or failed statehood.

Spencer Ackerman is an associate editor at The New Republic, where he covers Iraq. For a fully annotated version of the game with additional commentary, go to www.theatlantic.com/iraqgame.

Primary Sources

A liberal's case for the death penalty; can Iraq stop worrying about Iran?; bottomless appetites; congressional cheats

SECURITY

Our Nuclear Back Yard

Even as we worry about loose nukes in Russia, we might do well to keep a closer eye on nuclear materials at home. A new study from the National Academy of Sciences argues that pools of spent fuel from nuclear-power plants pose a security risk—less because terrorists might use the fuel to create a dirty bomb (obtaining enough would be extremely difficult) than because an attack could cause the fuel to ignite, creating a Chernobyl-like disaster in which large amounts of radiation are released into the environment. And plants are doing a dishearteningly “uneven” job of keeping track of their radioactive material, according to the Government Accountability Office, which found that during the past five years three plants have reported missing fuel and fuel rods.

—“Safety and Security of Commercial Spent Nuclear Fuel Storage: Public Report,” National Academy of Sciences; “NRC Needs to Do More to Ensure That Power Plants Are Effectively Controlling Spent Nuclear Fuel,” GAO

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Meddling Mullahs?

Iraq certainly has its problems, but contrary to fears voiced by U.S. and Iraqi officials, Iranian meddling probably isn't one of them—at least not at the moment. That's the conclusion, at any rate, of a new report by the International Crisis Group, a Brussels-based think tank, which finds that evidence of attempts by Iran to destabi-

lize or influence its neighbor is “far less extensive and clear than is alleged.” Whether such attempts would succeed is even less certain. Because of lingering animosity over the Iran-Iraq War and Iran's failure to support the Shiite uprising in southern Iraq immediately after the Gulf War, many Iraqis do not trust Iran and deeply resent it, the authors argue. They add that Iran's aims in Iraq are relatively modest, at least for now. Although Iran has a strong intelligence presence in Iraq and backs one of Iraq's largest political parties,

the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, these activities are designed not to “mold Iraq in its own image” but simply to prevent Iraq from re-emerging as a threat to Iran. However, the report warns, Iran could quickly ramp up its ambitions if it perceived an increase in Washington's “appetite for regime change” in Tehran.

—“Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence?,” International Crisis Group

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

Re-Rethinking the Death Penalty

Support for capital punishment is, of course, usually associated with the political right. But the lead author of a new paper making what might be termed the “big government” case for the death penalty is the noted liberal scholar Cass Sunstein.

The paper draws in part on a study conducted at Emory University, which found a direct association between the reauthorization of the death penalty, in 1977, and reduced homicide rates. The Emory researchers' “conservative estimate” was that on average, every execution deters eighteen murders. Sunstein and his co-author argue that this calculus makes the death penalty not just morally licit but morally required. A government that fails to make use of it, they write, is effectively condemning large numbers of its citizens to death—a sin of omission like failing to protect the environment or to provide adequate health care. “If each execution is saving many lives,” they conclude, “the harms of capital punishment would have to be very great to justify its abolition, far greater than most critics have heretofore alleged.”

—“Is Capital Punishment Morally Required?: The Relevance of Life-Life Tradeoffs,” Cass Sunstein and Adrian Vermeule, AEI-Brookings

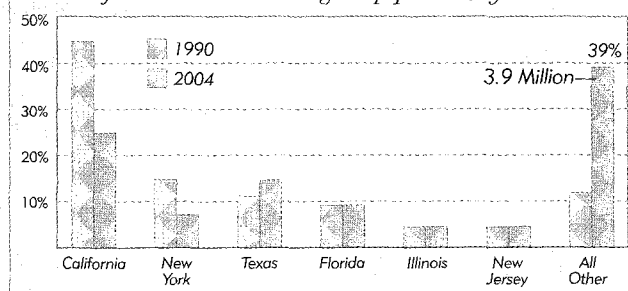
Out Again, In Again

The number of Americans on parole has risen along with the U.S. prison population, swelling from 197,000 in 1980 to 774,000 in 2003. But is conditional release, with the supervision it entails, worth the trouble and expense? This question was addressed in a recent Urban Institute report, which compared rates of recidivism among ex-convicts who were paroled with those among ex-convicts who were released with no strings attached. The study found that the recidivism rate among prisoners released unconditionally was virtually the same as that among “mandatory parolees,” or prisoners for whom parole

THE NATION

WHERE THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS ARE

Percent of total undocumented-migrant population, by state



Carolina, Here I Come

Beefed-up security measures since 9/11 have had little impact on the ability of illegal immigrants to enter the country, according to a report from the Pew Hispanic Center. Of the 10.3 million undocumented migrants in the United States as of last year, 3.1 million arrived in the past four years; not many more (3.6 million) arrived in the previous four-year period. The past fifteen years, however, have seen a significant shift in where they end up. In 1990 all but about 10 percent of illegal immigrants were concentrated in just six states (California alone was home to 45 percent); today only 60 percent of them live in those states, and once unlikely destinations such as North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee are becoming increasingly popular.

—“Estimates of the Size and Characteristics of the Undocumented Population,” Pew Hispanic Center

is part of a fixed sentence: 62 percent of the former and 61 percent of the latter were re-arrested at least once within two years. "Discretionary parolees," or prisoners released early after being vetted by a parole board, might be expected to do considerably better than others, having met various criteria before release. But they fared just slightly better: 54 percent were re-arrested within two years. Overall, parole is most effective in reducing recidivism rates among female prisoners, prisoners with few prior arrests, and those arrested for technical offenses or for violating public order. Among the largest category of released prisoners—males who have committed property, drug, or violent crimes—"the public safety impact of supervision is ... nonexistent," the authors write, adding that the current parole system "serves little purpose apart from providing false comfort."

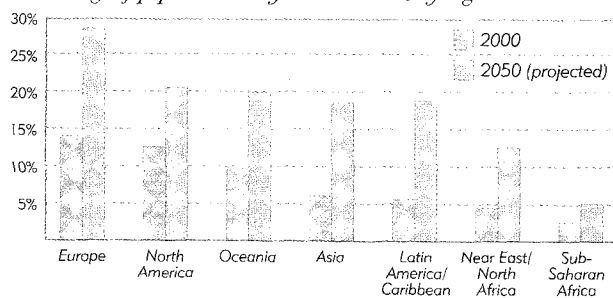
—"Does Parole Work?: Analyzing the Impact of Postprison Supervision on Rearrest Outcomes," Urban Institute

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Graying Globe

It's common knowledge that the United States and Europe face a dramatic increase in their elderly populations over the next half century, but the UN's annual "State of World Population" report points out a less widely known problem: the rest of the world will be coping with a similar challenge. By 2050 nearly 20 percent of the population of Asia and Latin America will be over sixty-five, and even Africa will see the percentage of potential pensioners double between now and then.

Percentage of population 65 years and older, by region



SOCIETY

No Smart Bully Left Behind

Since 2001, when the No Child Left Behind Act tied federal school funding to performance on annual tests for students in grades three through eight, critics have charged that the law encourages schools to boost their test scores artificially. A new study of one potential score-padding maneuver—suspending probable low scorers to prevent them from taking the test—provides grist for this argument. Researchers examined more than 40,000 disciplinary cases in Florida schools from the 1996–1997 school year (when Florida instituted its own mandatory testing) to the 1999–2000 school year. They found that when two students were suspended for involvement in the same incident, the student with the higher test score tended to have a shorter suspension. This isn't in itself surprising: high achievers are often cut some slack. But the gap was significantly wider during the period when

GOVERNMENT

Pay as They Go

According to federal statute, if a lawmaker misses a day of work while Congress is in session, he or she must forfeit that day's pay. But the law is rarely followed, according to the National Taxpayers Union, which compiled a list of the senators and representatives who missed more than 15 percent of the votes in 2003 and 2004 and noted how many days each one missed and how much pay that represented. The worst offenders were Democratic candidates for president, who among them accumulated more than \$300,000 in salary while on the campaign trail.

—"Numerous Congress Members May Have Received Illegal Congressional Pay in 2003–2004," National Taxpayers Union

TOP TEN DEADBEATS

	Days missed 2003	Days missed 2004	"Paid vacation"
Sen. John Kerry (D–Massachusetts)	76	70	\$90,932.68
Rep. Richard Gephardt (D–Missouri)	85	46	\$81,362.53
Sen. John Edwards (D–North Carolina)	52	50	\$63,543.16
Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D–Connecticut)	63	–	\$38,828.79
Rep. Luis Guterrez (D–Illinois)	19	23	\$26,197.51
Sen. Bob Graham (D–Florida)	41	–	\$25,269.53
Sen. James DeMint (R–South Carolina)	–	37	\$23,305.56
Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D–Ohio)	–	28	\$17,636.64
Rep. Ernie Fletcher (R–Kentucky)	27	N/A	\$16,640.91
Rep. Peter Deutsch (D–Florida)	–	23	\$14,487.24

the tests were administered, and it was wider only between students in grades being tested that year. Because "suspended students [make up] a very large share of the students who do not take the test," the study concludes that testing may give schools an incentive to keep their best students in school even when they misbehave, and to keep low-performing students out.

—"Testing, Crime and Punishment," David N. Figlio, National Bureau of Economic Research

If You Serve It, They Will Eat

The fattening of Americans in recent decades has occurred alongside a marked increase in the size of food packages and restaurant portions—and now a study suggests that these larger portions affect not just how much we eat but also our appetites, our perceptions of how much we have eaten, and when we feel "full."

Researchers gave fifty-four test subjects bowls of tomato soup—half of which were "self-refilling" bowls equipped with a hidden tube that slowly pumped soup in through the bottom as the subject ate. Those whose bowls had been refilled ate 73 percent more than the others, but reported themselves no more sated. And when asked to estimate how many calories they'd consumed, the subjects with normal bowls were more or less on target, underestimating their intake by only 32.3 calories—whereas those whose soup had been replenished slurped up 140.5 more calories than they thought.

—"Bottomless Bowls: Why Visual Cues of Portion Size May Influence Intake," B. Wansink et al., Obesity Research

Compiled by Ross Douhat and Marshall Poe. For links to the reports and documents discussed in these pages visit www.theatlantic.com/doc/200508/primarysources

THE NATION IN NUMBERS

Pfffft

The U.S. real-estate bubble is likely to leak, not pop

The American dream has never been easy to define with precision, but if current television is any indication, it has something to do with housing. Scores of shows appeal to viewers' home-improvement fantasies (*Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*), interior-design aesthetics (*Trading Spaces* and *Cribs*), and profit motives (*Designed to Sell*). "Property flipping," it seems, has replaced "tech stock" as the talismanic phrase embodying Americans' financial hopes. According to a National Association of Realtors study, 23 percent of all homes bought in 2004 were bought not as residences but as investments.

Is this evidence that we are in a real-estate bubble? The chart below—created by the Yale economist Robert Shiller for the second edition of his book *Irrational Exuberance*—suggests that we are. An index of U.S. home prices since 1890, it controls for factors that cause people to overestimate returns on home purchases: home improvements, increases in average house size, and inflation. In other words, it shows the real appreciation of a standard, unchanging house over time.

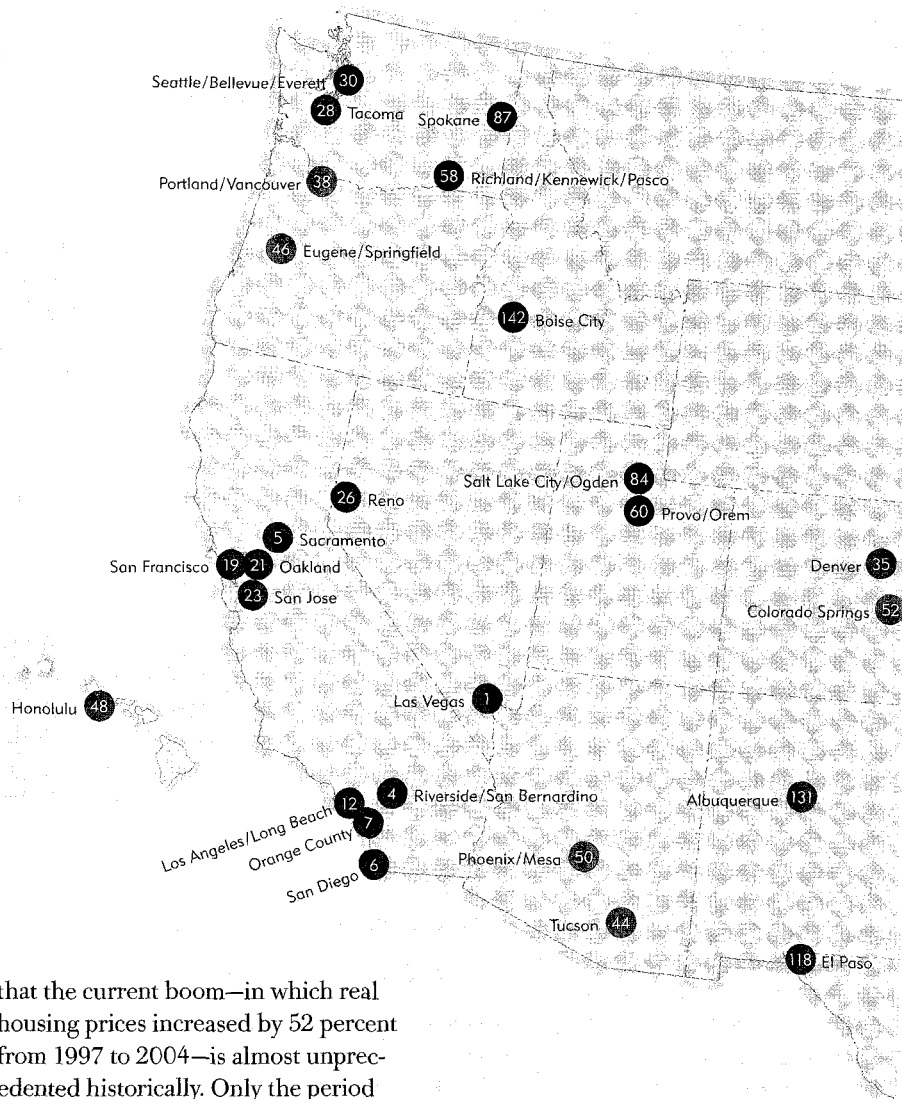
The chart plainly shows that—contrary to conventional wisdom—real estate has generally not been a road to riches. From 1890 to 2004 real home values rose by an average of only 0.4 percent a year. The chart also shows

that the current boom—in which real housing prices increased by 52 percent from 1997 to 2004—is almost unprecedented historically. Only the period after World War II—when legions of GIs came home to government housing subsidies—is comparable.

So what accounts for the boom? Low interest rates, expanded credit availability, and a reallocation of spending from travel to housing after 9/11 are all factors. But low interest rates can support high home values only as long

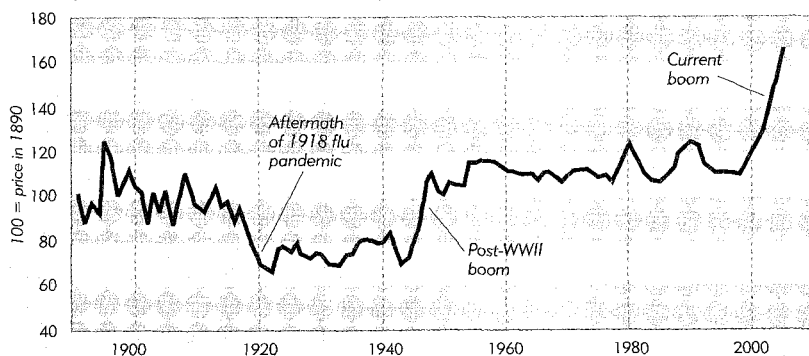
as they *stay* low, and none of these factors can fully account for the run-up in prices. It appears that residential real estate in the United States is simply overvalued today.

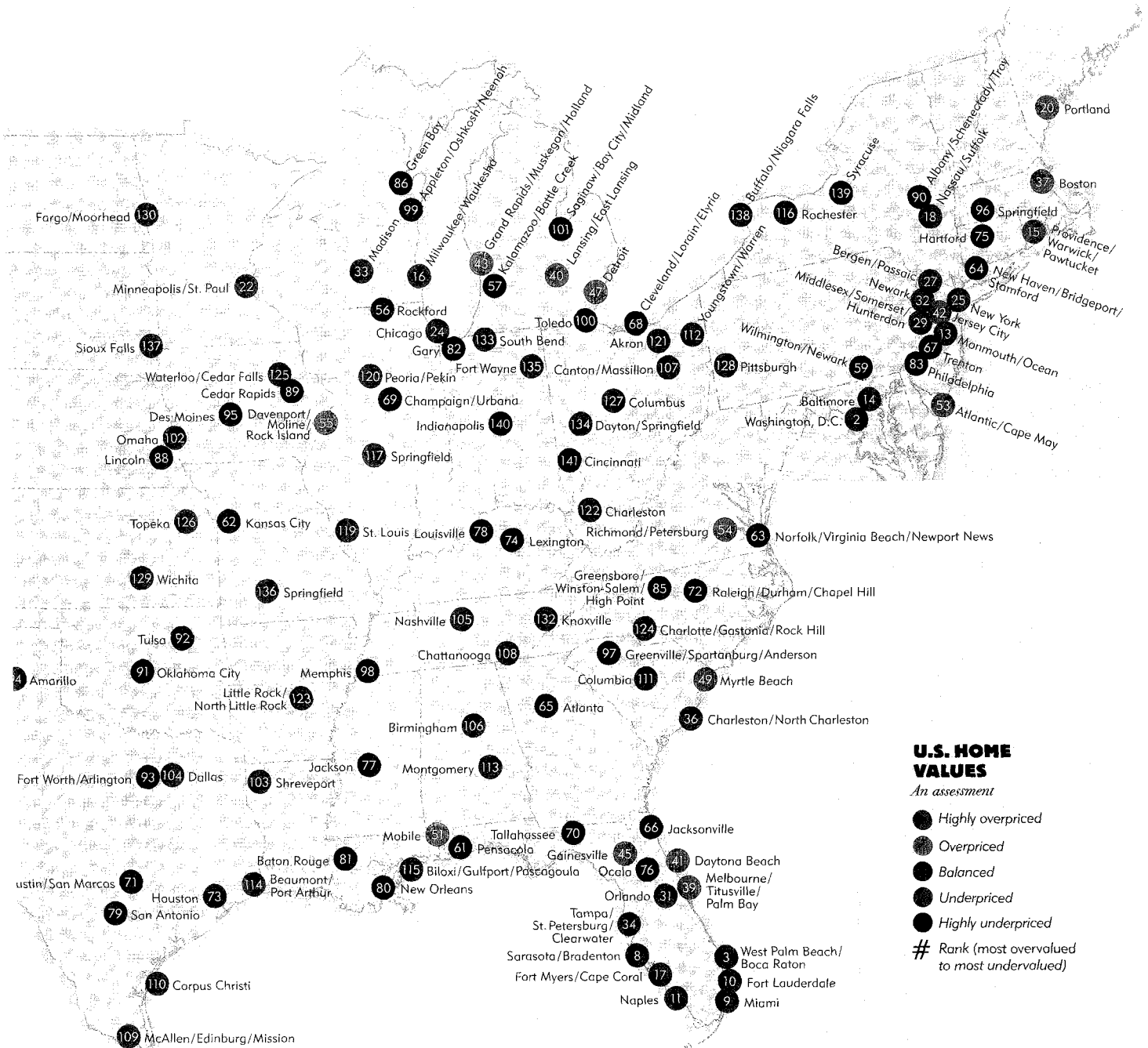
That said, real-estate markets are famously local. *The Single-Family Housing Monitor*, a report published by the research firm Economy.com, analyzes home-price imbalances in 142 metropolitan areas, comparing actual prices with what the regional market should be able to bear based on personal income, interest rates, construction costs, and housing supply. According to this model, housing was overvalued by an average of 21 percent in 2004 in the areas studied—more than in any other year since 1988, which is as far back as Economy.com has looked. But that figure is largely the result of moderate or severe overvaluation in many of America's largest cities. Overall, only about 40 percent of



THE REAL-ESTATE MARKET IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Index of inflation-adjusted U.S. home prices





the metro areas evaluated by Economy.com appear overpriced.

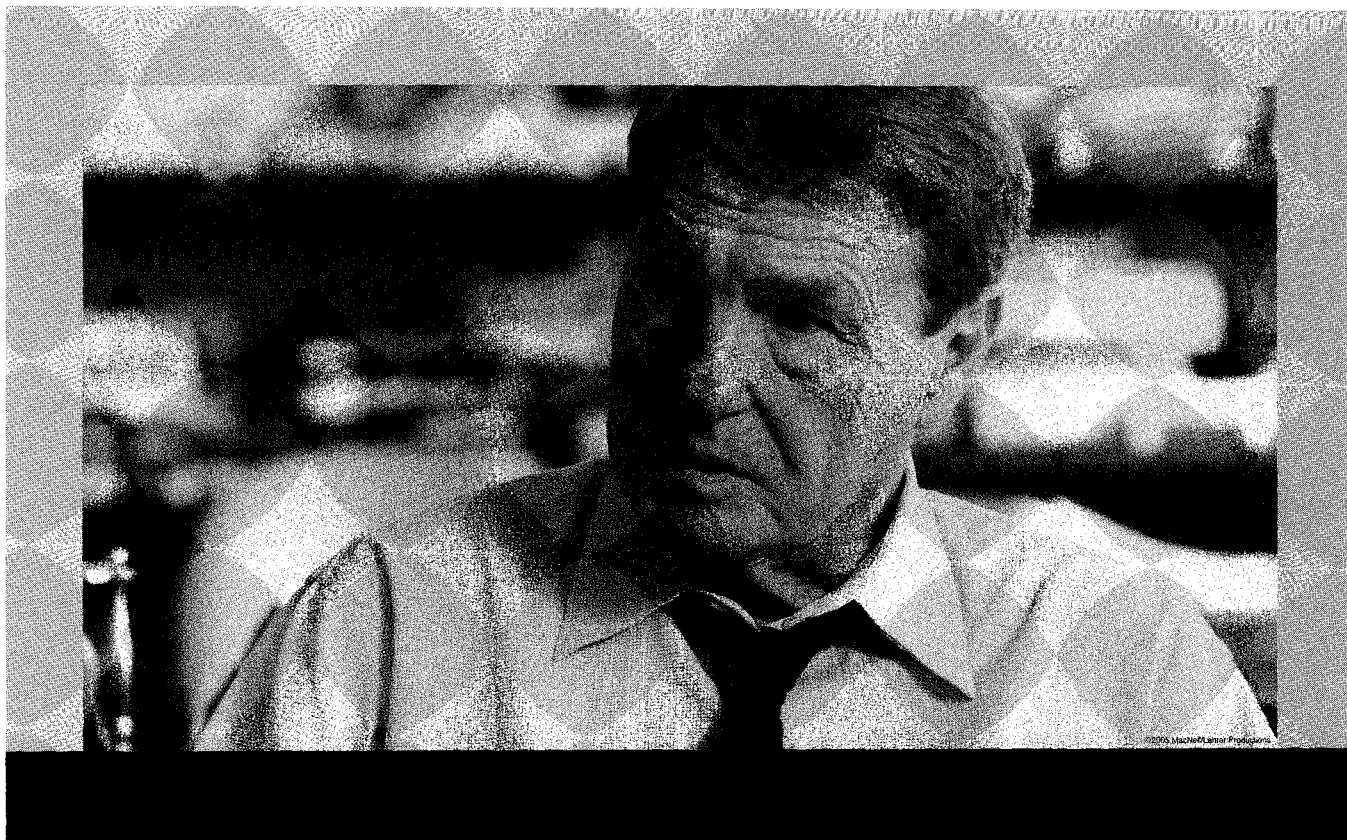
The overvalued markets tend to cluster on the coasts, where land for new construction is limited and evidence of portfolio-shifting from stocks to housing is strongest. The country's interior (Las Vegas being a major exception) seems less prone to bubbles, in part because new homes can be built easily and profitably whenever speculative pressures build.

Real-estate bubbles across the country could burst suddenly, particularly if some large crisis—such as a major oil shock or a run on the dollar—

were to rattle the economy first. But for the most part real-estate bubbles tend not to burst abruptly, like stock-market bubbles; rather, they deflate slowly, over years. That's partly because when prices begin to decline, many people refuse to sell their homes, thereby restricting the supply of housing and arresting the decline in prices.

So does that mean we can relax about these record-setting real-estate overvaluations? Not necessarily. If history is any guide, once home prices begin to falter, they are likely to decline or stay flat for many years. The resulting falloff in construction and in

home-equity-based spending will hurt the economy. But the greater damage may be to America's sense of itself as upwardly mobile—or as mobile, period. Many people, unwilling to sell at a loss, will feel stuck in homes that no longer suit them, in communities they want to leave. And the notion that our shelters can act as substitutes for saving, as ATMs for our vacations and forays into luxury living, as (self-financing) vehicles for our aesthetic impulses, will be punctured. We have become accustomed to treating our homes as tickets to financial freedom. Ultimately, that may be too much to ask. —DON PECK



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COUNTDOWN TO A MELTDOWN

*America's coming economic crisis.
A look back from the election of 2016*

BY JAMES FALLOWS

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and Beyond**

Sir:

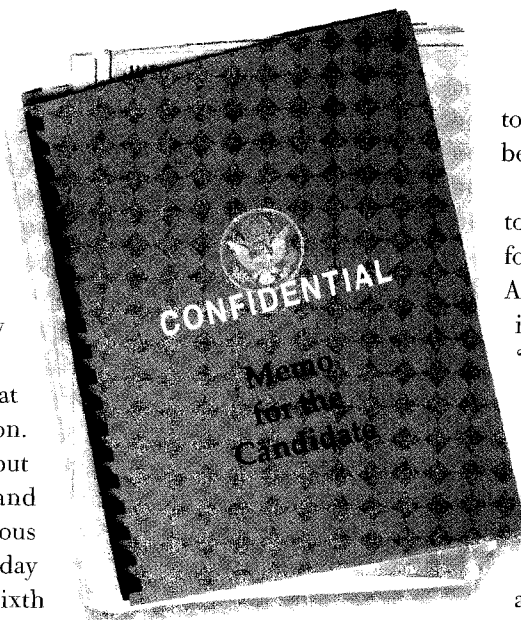
It is time to think carefully about the next year. Our position is uniquely promising—and uniquely difficult.

The promise lies in the fact that you are going to win the election. Nothing is guaranteed in politics, but based on everything we know, and barring an act of God or a disastrous error on our side, one year from today you will be sworn in as the forty-sixth president of the United States. And you will be the first president since before the Civil War to come from neither the Republican nor the Democratic Party.¹ This is one aspect of your electoral advantage right now: having created our new party, you are already assured of its nomination, whereas the candidates from the two legacy parties are still carving themselves up in their primaries.²

The difficulty, too, lies in the fact that you are going to win. The same circumstances that are bringing an end to 164 years of two-party rule have brought tremendous hardship to the country. This will be the first time since Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933 that so much is demanded so quickly from a new administration. Our challenge is not just to win the election but to win in a way that gives us a chance

¹ The last one was Millard Fillmore, a Whig. We will not emphasize this detail.

² Also, though I never thought I'd say it, thank God for the Electoral College. In only two states, Michigan and Maine, are you polling above 50 percent of the total vote—in Michigan because of the unemployment riots, in Maine because that's what they're like. But you will probably have a strong plurality in at least forty other states, yielding a Reagan-scale electoral-vote "mandate."



to address economic failures that have been fifty years in the making.

That is the purpose of this memo: to provide the economic background for the larger themes in our campaign. Although economic changes will be items one through ten on your urgent "to do" list a year from now, this is not the place to talk about them in detail. There will be plenty of time for that later, with the policy guys.

Instead I want to speak here not just as your campaign manager but on the basis of our friendship and shared efforts these past twenty years. Being completely honest about the

country's problems might not be necessary during the campaign—sounding pessimistic in speeches would hurt us. But we ourselves need to be clear about the challenge we face. Unless we understand how we got here, we won't be able to find the way out once you are in office.

Politics is about stories—the personal story of how a leader was shaped, the national story of how America's long saga has led to today's dramas. Your personal story needs no work at all. Dwight Eisenhower was the last president to enter office with a worldwide image of competence, though obviously his achievements were military rather than technological. But we have work to do on the national story.

When it comes to the old parties, the story boils down to this: the Democrats can't win, and the Republicans can't govern. Okay, that's an overstatement; but the more nuanced version is nearly as discouraging.

The past fifty years have shown that the Democrats can't win the presidency except when everything goes their way. Only three Democrats have reached the White House since Lyndon Johnson decided to leave. In 1976 they ran a pious-

sounding candidate against the political ghost of the disgraced Richard Nixon—and against his corporeal successor, Gerald Ford, the only unelected incumbent in American history. In 1992 they ran their most talented campaigner since FDR, and even Bill Clinton would have lost if Ross Perot had not stayed in the race and siphoned away votes from the Republicans. And in 2008 they were unexpectedly saved by the death of Fidel Castro. This drained some of the pro-Republican passion of South Florida's Cuban immigrants, and the disastrous governmental bungling of the "Cuba Libre" influx that followed gave the Democrats their first win in Florida since 1996—along with the election. But that Democratic administration could turn out to have been America's last. The Electoral College map drawn up after the 2010 census removed votes from all the familiar blue states except California, giving the Republicans a bigger head start from the Sunbelt states and the South.

As for the Republicans, fifty years have shown they can't govern without breaking the bank. Starting with Richard Nixon, every Republican president has left the dollar lower, the federal budget deficit higher, the American trade position weaker, and the U.S. manufacturing work force smaller than when he took office.

The story of the parties, then, is that the American people mistrust the Republicans' economic record, and don't trust the Democrats enough to let them try to do better. That is why—and it is the only reason why—they are giving us a chance. But we can move from electoral to *governmental* success only with a clear understanding of why so much has gone so wrong with the economy. Our internal polls show that nearly 90 percent of the public thinks the economy is "on the wrong track." Those readings should hold up, since that's roughly the percentage of Americans whose income has fallen in real terms in the past five years.

The story we will tell them begins fifteen years ago,³ and it has three chapters. For public use we'll refer to them by the names of the respective administrations. But for our own purposes it will be clearer to think of the chapter titles as "Cocking the Gun," "Pulling the Trigger," and "Bleeding."

1. COCKING THE GUN

Everything changed in 2001. But it didn't all change on September 11.

Yes, the ramifications of 9/11 will be with us for decades, much as the aftereffects of Pearl Harbor explain the presence of thousands of U.S. troops in Asia seventy-five years later. Before 2001 about 12,000 American troops

³ Nothing in history ever quite "begins." Did America's problems with militant Islam begin in 2001? Or twenty years earlier, when we funded the anti-Soviet *mujahideen* in Afghanistan, who later turned their weapons against us? Or sixty years before that, with the breakup of the Ottoman Empire after World War I? Or during the Crusades? Similarly, warning signs of today's economic problems were apparent in the mid-1960s. But the big change started fifteen years ago, at the beginning of this century.

were stationed in the Middle East—most of them in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Since 2003 we have never had fewer than 100,000 troops in CENTCOM's theater, most of them on active anti-insurgency duty. The locale of the most intense fighting keeps changing—first Afghanistan and Iraq, then Pakistan and Egypt, now Saudi Arabia and the frontier between Turkey and the Republic of Kurdistan—but the commitment goes on.

Before there was 9/11, however, there was June 7, 2001. For our purposes modern economic history began that day.

On June 7 President George W. Bush celebrated his first big legislative victory. Only two weeks earlier his new administration had suffered a terrible political blow, when a Republican senator left the party and gave Democrats a one-vote majority in the Senate. But the administration was nevertheless able to persuade a dozen Democratic senators to vote its way and authorize a tax cut that would decrease federal tax revenues by some \$1.35 trillion between then and 2010.

This was presented at the time as a way to avoid the "problem" of paying down the federal debt too fast. According to the administration's forecasts, the government was on the way to running up \$5.6 trillion in surpluses over the coming decade. The entire federal debt accumulated between the nation's founding and 2001 totaled only about \$3.2 trillion—and for technical reasons at most \$2 trillion of that total could be paid off within the next decade.⁴ Therefore some \$3.6 trillion in "unusable" surplus—or about \$12,000 for every American—was likely to pile up in the Treasury. The administration proposed to give slightly less than half of that back through tax cuts, saving the rest for Social Security and other obligations.

Congress agreed, and it was this achievement that the president celebrated at the White House signing ceremony on June 7. "We recognize loud and clear the surplus is not the government's money," Bush said at the time. "The surplus is the people's money, and we ought to trust them with their own money."

If the president or anyone else at that ceremony had had perfect foresight, he would have seen that no surpluses of any sort would materialize, either for the government to hoard or for taxpayers to get back. (A year later the budget would show a deficit of \$158 billion; a year after that \$378 billion.) By the end of Bush's second term the federal debt, rather than having nearly disappeared, as he expected, had tripled. If those in the crowd had had that kind of foresight,

⁴ The federal debt consists of bills, notes, and bonds that come due at different periods—thirteen weeks, five years, twenty years. The main way to retire debt is to pay off holders on the due date. Only \$2 trillion worth of debt would have matured within a decade, so only that much could be paid off. That is why the Bush administration's first budget message said, "Indeed, the President's Budget pays down the debt so aggressively that it runs into an unusual problem—its annual surpluses begin to outstrip the amount of maturing debt starting in 2007."

they would have called their brokers the next day to unload all their stock holdings. A few hours after Bush signed the tax-cut bill, the Dow Jones industrial average closed at 11,090, a level it has never reached again.⁵

In a way it doesn't matter what the national government intended, or why all forecasts proved so wrong. Through the rest of his presidency Bush contended that the reason was 9/11—that it had changed the budget as it changed everything else. It forced the government to spend more, for war and for homeland security, even as the economic dislocation it caused meant the government could collect less. Most people outside the administration considered this explanation misleading, or at least incomplete. For instance, as Bush began his second term the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office said that the biggest reason for growing deficits was the tax cuts.⁶

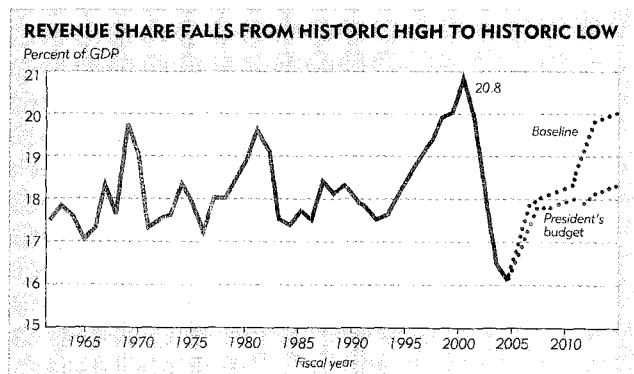
But here is what really mattered about that June day in 2001: from that point on the U.S. government had less money to work with than it had under the previous eight presidents. Through four decades and through administrations as diverse as Lyndon Johnson's and Ronald Reagan's, federal tax revenue had stayed within a fairly narrow band. The tax cuts of 2001 pushed it out of that safety zone, reducing it to its lowest level as a share of the economy in the modern era.⁷ And as we will see, these cuts—the first of three rounds⁸—did so just when the country's commitments and obligations had begun to grow.

As late as 2008 the trend could have been altered,

⁵In 2005 Ben White, of *The Washington Post*, noted the coincidence of the Dow's peak and Bush's signing of the tax-cut bill.

⁶Late in January of 2005 the CBO calculated that policy changes during Bush's first term had increased the upcoming year's deficit by \$539 billion. Of that amount about 37 percent could be attributed to warfare, domestic security, and other post-9/11 commitments; 48 percent resulted from the tax cuts; and the rest came from other spending increases.

⁷This CBO chart illustrates the pattern. The big dive is the result of the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts.



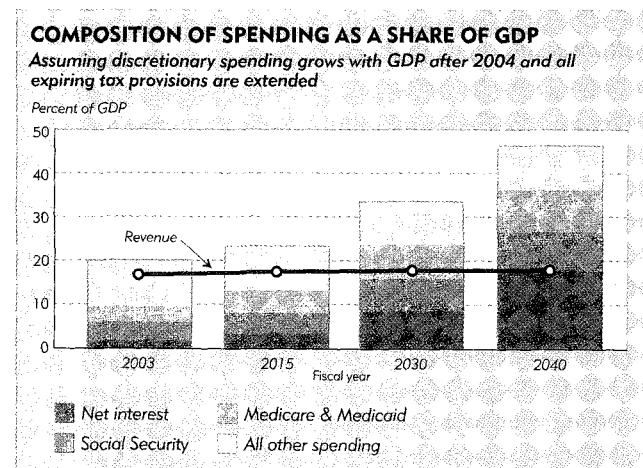
From 1962 to 2002, when federal revenues were low they were around 17.5 percent of GDP, and when they were high they neared 20 percent. Once, they went even higher: to 20.8 percent in Clinton's last year, driven there by higher tax rates and by capital-gains revenue from the bubble economy. The 2001 changes pushed tax receipts down toward 16 percent—the lowest level since 1959.

though the cuts of 2003 and 2005 had made things worse. But in the late summer of 2008 Senate Republicans once again demonstrated their mastery of the basic feints and dodges of politics. The tax cuts enacted during Bush's first term were in theory "temporary," and set to expire starting in 2010. But Congress didn't have to wait until 2010 to decide whether to make them permanent, so of course the Republican majority scheduled the vote at the most awkward moment possible for the Democrats: on the eve of a close presidential election. The Democratic senators understood their dilemma. Either they voted for the tax cuts and looked like hypocrites for all their past complaints, or they voted against them and invited an onslaught of "tax and spend" attack ads in the campaign. Enough Democrats made the "smart" choice. They held their seats in the election, and the party took back the presidency. But they also locked in the tax cuts, which was step one in cocking the gun.⁹

The explanation of steps two and three is much quicker: People kept living longer, and they kept saving less. Increased longevity is a tremendous human achievement but a fiscal challenge—as in any household where people outlive their savings. Late in 2003 Congress dramatically escalated the fiscal problem by adding prescription-drug coverage to Medicare, with barely any discussion of its long-term cost. David M. Walker, the government's comptroller

⁸In 2003 Congress approved a second round of tax cuts. In 2005, after a fifty-fifty deadlock, the Senate failed to enact a "pay as you go" provision, which would have required the administration to offset any tax cuts or spending increases by savings in the budget.

⁹Through the early 2000s the Government Accountability Office issued warnings about the consequences of extending the tax cuts. This chart, from 2004, showed what would happen to the budget if the tax cuts were locked in.



Its main point was that the basic operating costs of the federal government (interest payments, Social Security, and Medicare and Medicaid—the unglamorous long-term payments it is legally committed to make) were growing, and the money to cover them was not. As the GAO had predicted, our tax revenue in 2015 left only a small margin after covering fixed costs. From that remainder comes the Pentagon, the national parks, and everything else. Soon revenues won't cover even the fixed costs.

general at the time, said that the action was part of “the most reckless fiscal year in the history of the Republic,” because that vote and a few other changes added roughly \$13 trillion to the government’s long-term commitments.

The evaporation of personal savings was marveled at by all economists but explained by few. Americans saved about eight percent of their disposable income through the 1950s and 1960s, slightly more in the 1970s and 1980s, slightly less and then a lot less in the 1990s. At the beginning of this century they were saving, on average, just about nothing.¹⁰

The possible reasons for this failure to save—credit-card debt? a false sense of wealth thanks to the real-estate bubble?¹¹ stagnant real earnings for much of the population?—mattered less than the results. The country needed money to run its government, and Americans themselves weren’t about to provide it. This is where the final, secret element of the gun-cocking process came into play: the unspoken deal with China.

The terms of the deal are obvious in retrospect. Even at the time, economists discussed the arrangement endlessly in their journals. The oddity was that so few politicians picked up on what they said. The heart of the matter, as we now know, was this simple equation: each time Congress raised benefits, reduced taxes, or encouraged more borrowing by consumers, it shifted part of the U.S. manufacturing base to China.

Of course this shift had something to do with “unfair” trade, undereducated American workers, dirt-cheap Chinese sweatshops, and all the other things that American politicians chose to yammer about. But the “jobless recovery” of the early 2000s and the “jobless collapse” at the end of the decade could never have occurred without the strange intersection of American and Chinese (plus Japanese and Korean) plans. The Chinese government was determined to keep the value of its yuan as low as possible,

¹⁰ “In the last year, the net national savings rate of the United States has been between one and two percent,” the economist and then president of Harvard Lawrence Summers said in 2004, a year before the rate hit its nadir. “It represents the lowest net national savings rate in American history and, I believe, that of any major nation.” Summers gave the speech five years after his appointment as Treasury secretary and five years before his nomination as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board.

¹¹ Robert Shiller, an economist at Yale, was ahead of most other observers in predicting the collapse of the tech-stock bubble of the 1990s and the personal-real-estate bubble a decade later. In a paper for the National Bureau of Economic Research, published in 2001, he and two colleagues observed that the housing boom intensified the savings collapse. Every time homeowners heard that a nearby house had sold for an astronomical price, they felt richer, even if they had no intention of selling for years. That made them more likely to go out and spend their theoretical “gains”—and not to bother saving, since their house was doing it for them. “The estimated effect of housing market wealth on consumption is significant and large,” Shiller and his colleagues concluded. If people felt rich, they spent that way.

thus making Chinese exports as attractive as possible, so that Chinese factories could expand as quickly as possible, to provide work for the tens of millions of people trooping every year to Shanghai or Guangzhou to enter the labor force. To this end, Chinese banks sent their extra dollars right back to the U.S. Treasury, in loans to cover the U.S. budget deficit; if they hadn’t, normal market pressures would have driven up the yuan’s value.¹² This, in turn, would have made it harder for China to keep creating jobs and easier for America to retain them. But Americans would have had to tax themselves to cover the deficit.

This arrangement was called “Bretton Woods Two,” after the regime that kept the world economy afloat for twenty-five years after World War II. The question economists debated was how long it could last. One group said it could go on indefinitely, because it gave each country’s government what it really wanted (for China, booming exports and therefore a less dissatisfied population; for America, the ability to spend more while saving and taxing less). But by Bush’s second term the warning signals were getting louder. “This is starting to resemble a pyra-

¹² As background for the speechwriters, here is the longer version of what was happening.

In normal circumstances economic markets have a way of dealing with families, companies, or countries that chronically overspend. For families or companies that way is bankruptcy. For countries it is a declining currency. By normal economic measures the American public was significantly overspending in the early 2000s. For every \$100 worth of products and services it consumed, it produced only about \$95 worth within our borders. The other \$5 worth came from overseas. Normally an imbalance like this would push the dollar steadily down as foreigners with surplus dollars from selling oil or cars or clothes in America traded them for euros, yuan, or yen. As demand for dollars fell and their value decreased, foreign goods would become more expensive; Americans wouldn’t be able to afford as many of them; and ultimately Americans would be forced to live within the nation’s means.

That is in fact what happened in America’s trade with Europe—and to a large extent with the oil-producing world. The euro skyrocketed in value against the dollar, and oil prices—which until the crisis of 2009 were fixed in dollars—went up too, which preserved Saudi and Kuwaiti buying power for European goods.

It didn’t work this way with China. Americans bought and bought Chinese goods, and Chinese banks piled up dollars—but didn’t trade them back for yuan. Instead China’s central bank kept the yuan-to-dollar exchange rate constant and used the dollars to buy U.S. Treasury notes. That is, they covered the federal budget deficit. (Since Americans, on average, were saving nothing, they couldn’t cover it themselves.) To a lesser extent Korean and Japanese banks did the same thing.

This was different from the situation in the 1980s and 1990s, when foreigners earned dollars from their exports and used those dollars to buy American companies, real estate, and stock. In those days foreigners invested heavily in America because the payoff was so much greater than what they could get in Frankfurt or Tokyo. In an influential paper published in 2004 the economists Nouriel Roubini, of New York University, and Brad Setser, of Oxford University, demonstrated that this was no longer the case. Increasingly it was not individuals or corporations but foreign governments—in particular, state-controlled banks in Asia—that were sending money to America. And America was using it to finance the federal budget deficit.

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mid scheme,” the *Financial Times* warned early in 2005.¹³ The danger was that the system was fundamentally unstable. Almost overnight it could go from working well to collapsing. If any one of the Asian countries piling up dollars (and most were doing so) began to suspect that any other was about to unload them, all the countries would have an incentive to sell dollars as fast as possible, before they got stuck with worthless currency. Economists in the “soft landing” camp said that adjustments would be gradual, and that Chinese self-interest would prevent a panic. The “hard landing” camp—well, we know all too well what they were concerned about.

2. PULLING THE TRIGGER

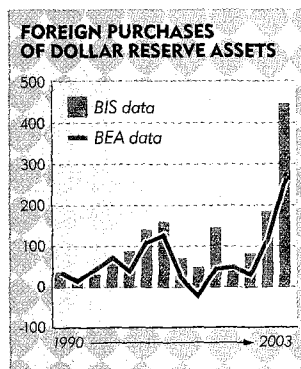
The 2008 election, like those in 2000 and 2004, could have gone either way. If Fidel Castro had died two years earlier, the second Bay of Pigs tragedy and related “regime change” difficulties might have been dim memories by Election Day. Or if he had died a year later, the Cuban-American bloc of Florida voters would have been as reliably Republican in 2008 as in the previous fifty years. Since the red state–blue state divide was otherwise the same as in 2000 and 2004, if the Republicans had held Florida they would presumably have held the White House as well—despite mounting unease about debt, deficits, job loss, and rising U.S. casualties in Pakistan.

But by dying when he did, at eighty-two, and becoming the “October surprise” of the 2008 campaign, Castro got revenge on the Republicans who had for years supported the Cuban trade embargo. Better yet, he got revenge on his original enemies, the Democrats, too.¹⁴ Castro couldn’t have planned it, but his disappearance was the beginning—the first puff of wind, the trigger—of the catastrophe that followed.

Or perhaps we should call it the first domino to fall, because what then happened had a kind of geometric inevitability. The next domino was a thousand miles across the Caribbean, in Venezuela. Hugo Chavez, originally elected as a crusading left-winger, was by then well into his role as an outright military dictator. For years our diplomats had grumbled that Chavez was “Castro with oil,” but after

¹³ The paper used this chart to show how foreign money was supporting U.S. spending.

¹⁴ We now know from the memoirs of his eldest son, Fidelito, that Castro never moderated his bitter view of the Kennedy brothers—Jack for authorizing the Bay of Pigs invasion, Bobby for encouraging the CIA to assassinate Castro—and, by extension, their Democratic Party. Castro told his children that if the United States and Cuba ever reconciled, he dreamed of doing two things: throwing an opening-day pitch at Yankee Stadium, and addressing a Republican convention in prime time. (From *Mi Papa: The Castro I Knew*, Las Vegas: HarperCollins, 2009.)



NEW YORK TIMES INTERNATIONAL



at the funeral of Fidel Castro yesterday. The Cuban

the real Castro’s death the comparison had new meaning. A right-wing militia of disgruntled Venezuelans, emboldened by the news that Castro was gone, attempted a coup at the beginning of 2009, shortly after the U.S. elections. Chavez captured the ringleaders, worked them over, and then broadcast their possibly false “confession” that they had been sponsored by the CIA. That led to Chavez’s “declaration of economic war” against the United States, which in practice meant temporarily closing the gigantic Amuay refinery, the source of one eighth of all the gasoline used on American roads—and reopening it two months later with a pledge to send no products to American ports.

That was when the fourth—and worst—world oil shock started.¹⁵ For at least five years economists and oilmen alike

¹⁵ The first one, starting in 1973, transformed the world more than most wars do. It empowered OPEC; enriched much of the Middle East; brought on five years of inflation, slow growth, and stock-market stagnation in the United States; pushed Japan toward a radically more energy-efficient industry; and more. The second, after the Iranian

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had warned that there was no "give" in the world oil market. In the early 2000s China's consumption was growing five times as fast as America's—and America was no slouch. (The main difference was that China, like India, was importing oil mainly for its factories, whereas the United States was doing so mainly for its big cars.¹⁶) Even a temporary disruption in the flow could cause major dislocations.

.....
revolution of 1979, caused the inflation that helped drive Jimmy Carter from office, and spilled over into the recession of Ronald Reagan's first two years. The third, after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, disrupted world trade enough to lay the groundwork for Bill Clinton's "It's the economy, stupid" attack against George H.W. Bush. And seven years after the shock of 2009 began, we are still feeling its effects.

¹⁶ After the first oil shock U.S. oil consumption actually fell in absolute terms. In 1973, as the first shock began, Americans consumed 35 "quads," or quadrillion BTUs, of oil. Ten years later, with a larger population and a stronger economy, they consumed only 30. But from that point on total consumption moved back up. In 2003 Americans consumed 39 quads—and *two thirds* of that oil was for transportation. Consumption for most other purposes, notably heating and power generation, actually went down, thanks to more-

All the earlier oil shocks had meant short-term disruptions in supply (that's why they were "shocks"), but this time the long term was also in question. Geologists had argued about "peaking" predictions for years, but the concept was on everyone's lips by 2009.¹⁷

The Democrats had spent George Bush's second term preparing for everything except what was about to hit them. Our forty-fourth president seemed actually to welcome being universally known as "the Preacher," a nickname like "Ike" or "Honest Abe." It was a sign of how much emphasis he'd put on earnestly talking about faith, family, and firearms to voters in the heartland, in his effort to help the Democrats close the "values gap." But he had no idea what to do (to be fair, the man he beat, "the Veep," would not have known either) when the spot price of oil rose by 40 percent in the week after the Chavez declaration—and then everything else went wrong.

Anyone who needed further proof that God is a Republican would have found it in 2009. When the price of oil went up, the run on the dollar began. "Fixed exchange rates with heavy intervention [in essence, Bretton Woods Two] have enormous capacity to create an illusory sense of stability that could be shattered very quickly," Lawrence Summers had warned in 2004. "That is the lesson of Britain in 1992, of Mexico in 1994, of emerging Asia in 1997, of Russia in 1998, and of Brazil in 1998." And of the United States in 2009. It didn't help that Hugo Chavez had struck his notorious then-secret deal with the Chinese: preferential future contracts for his oil, which China needed, in return for China's backing out of Bretton Woods Two, which Chavez wanted.

There had been hints of how the falling dominoes would look as early as January of 2005. In remarks made at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Fan Gang, the director of China's nongovernmental National Economic Research Institute, said that "the U.S. dollar

.....
efficient systems. Industrial consumption was flat. So bigger cars and longer commutes did make the difference.

¹⁷ Every oil field follows a pattern of production: Its output rate starts slow and keeps getting faster until about half the oil has been pumped from the field. Then the rate steadily declines until the other half of the oil is gone. Since total world production is the aggregate of thousands of fields, it is presumed to follow a similar pattern. In 2005 the research and engineering firm SAIC released a report commissioned by the U.S. government on best guesses about the worldwide peak and what would happen when it came. "No one knows with certainty when world oil production will reach a peak," the report said, "but geologists have no doubt that it will happen." Of the twelve experts surveyed for the report, six predicted that the peak would have occurred before 2010, and three more that it would happen by 2020.

The world was not going to "run out" of oil—at least not immediately. Even at the peak, by definition, as much as had ever been pumped in history was still there to be extracted. But the rate of production, barrels per day and per year, would steadily lessen while the rate of demand kept increasing. The report was released when oil crossed \$50 a barrel; we are long into the era of oil at 30 euros, or \$90.

is no longer seen as a stable currency.”¹⁸ This caused a quick flurry in the foreign-exchange markets. It was to the real thing what the World Trade Center car bomb in 1993 was to 9/11.

When we read histories of the late 1920s, we practically want to scream, *Stop! Don't buy all that stock on credit! Get out of the market before it's too late!* When we read histories of the dot-com boom in the late 1990s, we have the same agonizing sense of not being able to save the victims from themselves: *Don't take out that home-equity loan to buy stocks at their peak! For God's sake, sell your Cisco shares when they hit 70, don't wait till they're back at 10!*

In retrospect, the ugly end is so obvious and inevitable. Why didn't people see it at the time? The same clearly applies to what happened in 2009. Economists had laid out the sequence of causes and effects in a “hard landing,” and it worked just as they said it would.

Once the run on the dollar started, everything seemed to happen at once. Two days after the Venezuelan oil shock the dollar was down by 25 percent against the yen and the yuan. Two weeks later it was down by 50 percent. By the time trading “stabilized,” one U.S. dollar bought only 2.5 Chinese yuan—not eight, as it had a year earlier.¹⁹

As the dollar headed down, assets denominated in dollars suddenly looked like losers. Most Americans had no choice but to stay in the dollar economy (their houses were priced in dollars, as were their savings and their paychecks), but those who had a choice unloaded their dollar holdings fast.²⁰ The people with choices were the very richest Americans, and foreigners of every sort. The two kinds of assets they least wanted to hold were shares in U.S.-based companies, since the plummeting dollar would wipe out any conceivable market gains, and dollar-based bonds, including U.S. Treasury debt. Thus we had twin, reinforcing

panics: a sudden decline in share prices plus a sudden selloff of bonds and Treasury holdings. The T-note selloff forced interest rates up, which forced stock prices further down, and the race to the bottom was on.

Because interest rates had been so low for so long, much of the public had forgotten how nasty life could be when money all of a sudden got tight.²¹ Every part of the cycle seemed to make every other part worse.

Businesses scaled back their expansion or investment plans, since borrowed money was more expensive. That meant fewer jobs. Mortgage rates went up, so buyers who might have bid on a \$400,000 house could now handle only \$250,000. That pushed real-estate values down; over time the \$400,000 house *became* a \$250,000 house. Credit-card rates were more onerous, so consumers had to cut back their spending. Some did it voluntarily, others in compliance with the Garnishee Amendments to the Bankruptcy Act of 2008. Businesses of every sort had higher fixed costs: for energy, because of the oil-price spike; for imported components, because of the dollar's crash; for everything else, because of ripple effects from those changes and from higher interest rates. Those same businesses had lower revenues, because of the squeeze on their customer base. Early in Bush's second term economists had pointed out that the U.S. stock indexes were surprisingly weak considering how well U.S. corporations had been doing.²² The fear of just these developments was why.

Americans had lived through a similar self-intensifying cycle before—but not since the late 1970s, when many of today's adults were not even born. Back in those days the sequence of energy-price spike, dollar crash, interest-rate surge, business slowdown, and stock-market loss had over-

²¹ Let's make up flash cards for the speechwriters, so they are clear about the role of interest rates.

When interest rates go *up*, these things go *down*: stock-market prices, bond prices, housing prices, overall economic growth rates, overall investment, overall job creation.

The most important thing that goes *up* when interest rates rise is the value of the dollar. We'll save the cause and effect for our policy guys, but make sure the writers have these points straight.

For the speechwriters' benefit, let's spell this out too: Why did the dollar panic raise interest rates? Two related reasons. First, interest rates are ultimately set by supply and demand. If the Treasury can't sell enough notes at four percent to cover the deficit, it will keep raising the rate—to five, six, ten percent—until it gets the money it needs. Second, the main way a government can keep up the value of its currency is to raise interest rates, hoping to attract investments that would otherwise be made in yuan, euros, or yen.

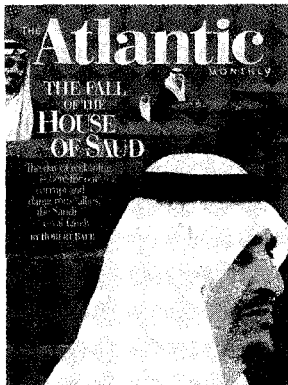
²² In the spring of 2005, as stock averages slid week by week, W. Bowman Cutter, a managing partner of the investment-banking firm Warburg Pincus, asked, “Why are we not in a bull market now?” He said that if you looked at the traditional measures of economic strength—high corporate investment, rapid productivity improvements, strong overall growth rates—“you would have to say that 2004 was the best year of the past twenty.” Interest rates at the time were still very low. “If you transposed this to any other era in history,” Cutter said, “you would have a very strong bull market. Why not now? Because the market is looking to the long-term structural problems.” If the market couldn't go up when conditions were promising, it had no cushion when the crisis began.

¹⁸ That turned out to be the next-to-last convening of the Davos conference, before the unproven but damaging accusations that it was a front for the A. Q. Khan combine.

¹⁹ What happened to America almost exactly repeated what had happened ten years earlier to Thailand, Indonesia, and other countries during the Asian panic of 1997–1998. South Korea lost 50 percent of the value of its currency in two months; Indonesia lost 80 percent over the course of a year. As in America, the collapse of each currency led to equally deep stock-market declines. The Asian crash also turned into a foreign-policy nightmare for the United States, with Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia leading the denunciation of U.S.-based financiers, including the “moron” George Soros, for the “criminal” speculations that destroyed the economies of smaller nations like his. Since Malaysia and Indonesia are largely Muslim, and the financiers could be cast as part of the great shadowy U.S.-Zionist cabal, the crash worsened U.S. relations with the Islamic world.

²⁰ Once the foreigners knew that the dollar had hit bottom, they came back to buy shares at bargain prices. But the currency run of 2009 showed the same pattern as the tech-stock crash of 2000 and, indeed, the generalized market panic of the 1930s: prices stayed depressed for years, because investors who had suffered heavy losses were understandably slow to return.

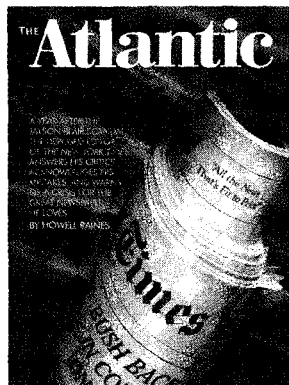
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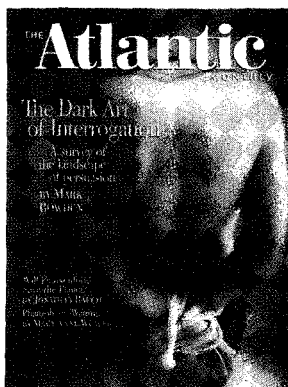
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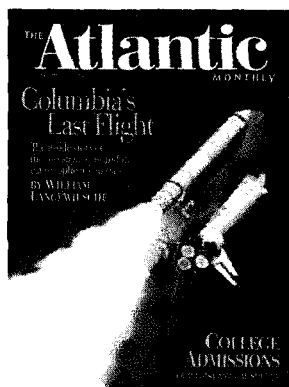
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whelmed poor Jimmy Carter—he of the promise to give America “a government as good as its people.” This time it did the same to the Preacher, for all his talk about “a new Democratic Party rooted in the oldest values of a free and faithful country.” When he went down, the future of his party almost certainly went with him.

The spate of mergers and acquisitions that started in 2010 was shocking at the time but looks inevitable in retrospect. When the CEOs of the three remaining U.S. airlines had their notorious midnight meeting at the DFW Hilton, they knew they were breaking two dozen antitrust laws and would be in financial and legal trouble if their nervy move failed. But it worked. When they announced the new and combined AmFly Corporation, regulators were in no position to call their bluff. At their joint press conference the CEOs said, Accept our more efficient structure or we’ll all declare bankruptcy, and all at once. The efficiencies meant half as many flights (for “fuel conservation”) as had been offered by the previously competing airlines, to 150 fewer cities, with a third as many jobs (all non-union).²³ Democrats in Congress didn’t like it, nor did most editorialists, but the administration didn’t really have a choice. It could swallow the deal—or it could get ready to take over the routes, the planes, the payrolls, and the passenger complaints, not to mention the decades of litigation.

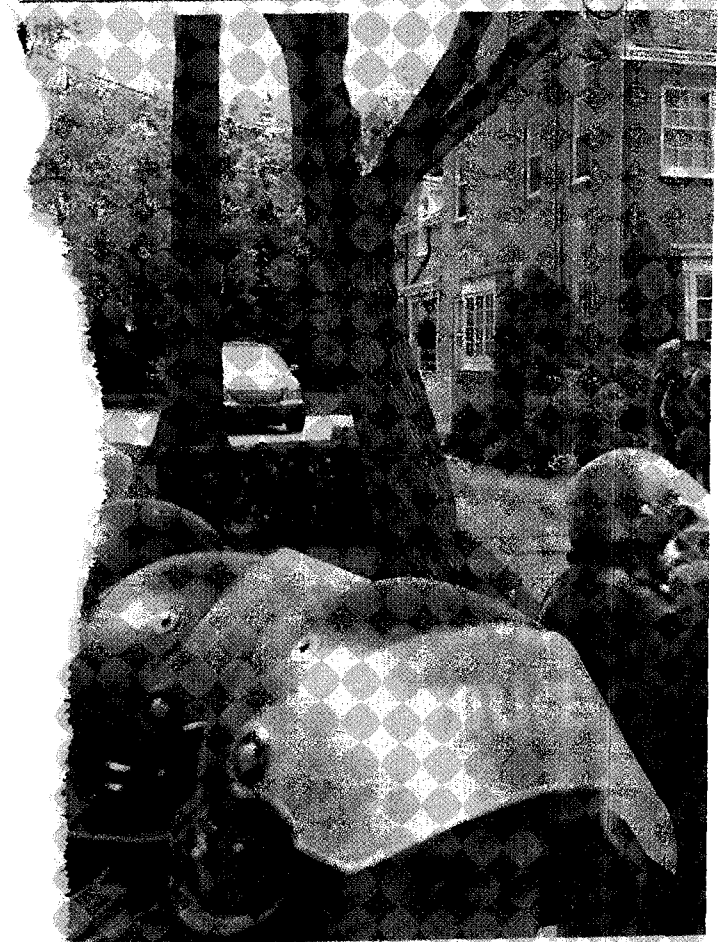
Toyota’s acquisition of General Motors and Ford, in 2012, had a similar inevitability. Over the previous decade the two U.S. companies had lost money on every car they sold. Such profit as they made was on SUVs, trucks, and Hummer-style big rigs. In 2008, just before the oil shock, GM seemed to have struck gold with the Strykette—an adaptation of the Army’s Stryker vehicle, so famous from Iraq and Pakistan, whose marketing campaign attracted professional women. Then the SUV market simply disappeared. With gasoline at \$6 a gallon, the prime interest rate at 15 percent, and the stock and housing markets in the toilet, no one wanted what American car makers could sell.²⁴ The weak dollar, and their weak stock prices, made the companies a bargain for Toyota.²⁵

For politicians every aspect of this cycle was a problem: the job losses, the gasoline lines, the bankruptcies, the

²³ Jobs in the airline industry had been plummeting for years. In 2000 the eight largest carriers employed 432,000 people. Four years later a third of those jobs were gone. That meant the loss of 136,000 mainly unionized, mainly high-wage jobs, offset by a small increase in lower-paid jobs at regional and discount airlines.

²⁴ U.S. auto companies and the U.S. auto-buying public suffered in different ways from the “slowness” of America’s industry compared with Japan’s, China’s, and Korea’s. It took Detroit companies three years to shift production from trucks and SUVs to hybrid cars; by that time the Asian brands owned the market. Also, it took the American fleet as a whole a surprisingly long time to change. The average car on America’s roads is nine years old, and in the course of a decade only half of all cars are replaced. It takes a long time to work the older gas-guzzlers out of the system.

²⁵ The rising value of the euro and the troubled state of the airline market might well have made Boeing a similar target for the new Airbus-



summoned for the fifth consecutive day to oversee

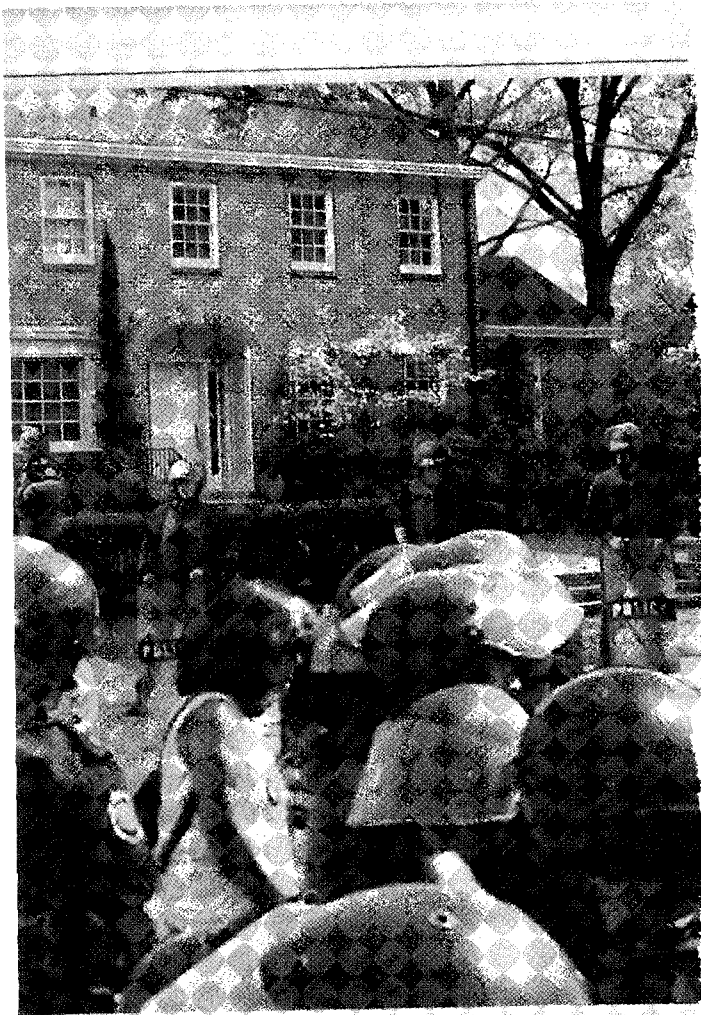
hard-luck stories of lifetime savings vanishing as the stock market headed down. But nothing matched the nightmare of foreclosures.

For years regulators and financiers had worried about the “over-leveraging” of the American housing market. As housing prices soared in coastal cities, people behaved the way they had during the stock-market run-up of the 1920s: they paid higher and higher prices; they covered more and more of the purchase price with debt; more and more of that debt was on “floating rate” terms—and everything was fine as long as prices stayed high and interest rates stayed low.

When the market collapsed, Americans didn’t behave the way economic theory said they should.²⁶ They behaved the way their predecessors in the Depression had: they stayed in their houses, stopped paying their mortgages, and waited for the banks to take the next step. Through much

Mitsubishi consortium—but for the Transformational Air Mobility Industrial Base Act of 2011, which converted Boeing’s factories to national-defense production facilities on a par with Navy shipyards.

²⁶ Through the boom years speculators would borrow the entire cost of a house. If they could “flip” it in a year or two, the profit on the sale would offset the interest they’d paid. But after mortgage rates “floated” up above 10 percent, the calculation changed. The house’s



ons in Alexandria, Virginia.

of the Midwest this was a manageable problem: the housing market had gone less berserk to begin with, and, as in the Great Depression, there was a longer-term, more personal relationship between customers and financiers. But in the fastest-growing markets—Orlando, Las Vegas, the Carolina Research Triangle, northern Virginia—the banks simply could not wait. The deal brokered at the White House Security-in-Shelter Summit was ingenious: federal purchase of one million RVs and mobile homes, many of them built at idle auto or truck factories; subsidies for families who agreed to leave foreclosed homes without being evicted by marshals, such that they could buy RVs with no payments for five years; and the use of land at decommissioned military bases for the new RV villages. But it did not erase the blog-cam live broadcasts of families being evicted, or the jokes about the “Preachervilles” springing up at Camp Lejeune,

value was heading down, and the cost of covering the mortgage was heading up. If the house were just another asset, the rational choice would be to move out and give it back to the bank. But houses aren’t normal assets, and that’s not what people did.

²⁷ The pattern goes back to the very beginning of the modern primary system, after World War II, and it has no exceptions. If an incumbent faces a serious, vote-getting rival for his party’s nomination, he goes on to lose the White House. If not, he stays in.

the former Fort Ord, and the Philadelphia naval shipyard.

Here is how we know that a sitting president is going to lose: he is seriously challenged in his own party’s primaries.²⁷ So if the economic tailspin had left any doubts about the prospects for the Preacher and his party, they were removed by the clamor to run against him in the Democratic primaries of 2012. The party’s biggest names were all there: the senators from New York, Illinois, and Florida; the new governors of California and Pennsylvania; the mayor of New York, when it looked as if the Olympic Games would still be held there that fall; and the actor who in his three most recent films had captured Americans’ idea of how a president should look and sound, and who came closest to stealing the nomination from the incumbent.

He and the rest of them were probably lucky that their campaigns fell short—not that any politician ever believes that. The Democratic nomination in 2012 was obviously a poisoned chalice, but a politician can’t help thinking that a poisoned chalice is better than no chalice at all. The barrier none of them could have overcome was the financial crisis of state and local government.

All that befell the federal budget during the collapse of 2009–2012 happened to state and local governments, too, but more so. They had to spend more—on welfare, Medicaid, jails, police officers—while taking in less. One by one their normal sources of funding dried up.²⁸ Revenues from the multi-state lottery and the FreedomBall drawings rose a bit. Unfortunately, the surge of spending on casino gambling in forty-three states and on legalized prostitution in thirty-one didn’t benefit state and local governments, because except in Nevada those activities were confined to Indian reservations, and had only an indirect stimulative effect.

And many governors and mayors faced a reality the president could avoid: they operated under constitutions and charters that forbade deficit spending. So they had no practical choice but to tighten the clamps at both ends, cutting budgets and raising taxes. The process had begun before the crash, as politicking in most state capitols was dominated by “intractable” budget disputes.²⁹ When the downturn really hit, even governors who had never heard of John Maynard Keynes sensed that it was a bad idea to raise taxes on people who were being laid off and evicted. But they were obliged by law to balance their budgets. All mayors and governors knew that it

²⁸ State and local governments tax income, which was falling; property, whose value was plummeting; and retail sales, which were down as well. The blue states were somewhat cushioned against the shocks in comparison with the many red states that had declined to impose state income taxes. Those states depended on property taxes, a fast-disappearing revenue source. Also, since the Nixon years red and blue states alike had relied on federal revenue sharing. This was slashed as part of the Emergency Budget Act of 2012.

²⁹ In 2002 the Rockefeller Institute of Government projected budget trends for the states through 2010, and found that forty-four of them were headed for long-term deficits like the ones plaguing the federal government. The difference, again, is that many states were obliged to change their policies to avoid the deficits.

would be dicey to renege on their basic commitments to education, public safety, public health, and public infrastructure. But even in hindsight it is hard to know what else they could have done. California did too much too fast in closing sixty-three of its 110 community colleges³⁰ and imposing \$9,500 annual “user fees” in place of the previous nominal fees. Its solution to the financing crisis on its high-end campuses was defter—especially the “Great Pacific Partnership” between the University of California and Tsinghua University, in Beijing. This was a win-win arrangement, in which the Chinese Ministry of Education took over the funding of the UC Berkeley physics, computer-science, and biology laboratories, plus the genomics laboratory at UC San Francisco, in exchange for a 51 percent share of all resulting patents.

State and local governments across the country did what they could. Fee-for-service became the norm—first for “enrichment” programs in the schools, then to underwrite teachers’ salaries, then for emergency police calls, then for inclusion in routine police and fire patrols. First in Minnesota, soon after in Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania, there were awkward moments when the governor, exercising his power as commander in chief of the state National Guard, ordered the Guard’s medical units to serve in hospitals that had furloughed nurses and emergency-room doctors. The Democratic president decided not to force the question of who had ultimate control over these “citizen soldiers.” This averted a showdown in the short term, but became one more attack point for the Republicans about weak and vacillating Democrats. Cities within 150 miles of the Mexican border opened police-service and trash-hauling contracts to companies based in Mexico. The state of Georgia, extending a practice it had begun in the early 2000s, said that it would hire no new public school teachers except under the “Partnership for Excellence” program, which brought in cut-rate teachers from India.³¹

The chaos in public services spelled the end for the administration, and for the Democratic Party in the long run. The Democrats couldn’t defend the unions. They couldn’t defend pensioners. They couldn’t even do much for their limousine liberals. The nation had never been more in the mood for firm leadership. When the “Desert Eagle” scored his astonishing coup in the Saudi Arabian desert just before Christmas of 2011, America knew who its next leader would be. For a four-star general to join his enlisted men in a nighttime HALO³² special-operations assault was against all established practice.

³⁰ This accelerated a trend that had begun a decade earlier in California. For instance, when the 2003 school year began, some 175,000 students could not find space in community colleges—which, like K–12 public schools, had previously offered enrollment to all eligible students.

³¹ Gwinnett County, near Atlanta, opened many school administrators’ eyes to this possibility in 2004, when it brought in twenty-seven teachers from Hyderabad. In 2005 an examination board in England outsourced the grading of high-school achievement exams to workers in India.

The Eagle’s determination to go ahead with the stunt revealed him to be essentially a MacArthuresque ham. But the element of surprise was total, and the unit surrounded, captured, and gagged Osama bin Laden before he was fully awake.

The general’s news conference the next day had the largest live audience in history, breaking the record set a few months earlier by the coronation of England’s King William V. The natural grace of this new American hero was like nothing the world had seen since Charles Lindbergh landed in Paris. His politics were indistinct, but if anything, that was a plus. He was strong on defense; urgent (without details) about “fighting smart against our economic enemies”; and broadly appealing on “values”—a devout Catholic who had brought the first openly gay commandos into a front-line combat unit. (“When we were under fire, I never asked who they loved, because I knew they loved our flag.”) Political pros had always assumed that America’s first black president would be a Republican and a soldier, and they were right. He just didn’t turn out to be Colin Powell.

The only suspense in the election was how big the win would be. By Labor Day it was clear that the Democrats might lose even the District of Columbia, whose rich residents were resentful about their ravaged stock portfolios, and whose poor residents had been cut off from Medicaid, welfare, and schools. As the nation went, so went the District, and after fifty-seven presidential elections the United States had its first across-the-board electoral sweep.

3. BLEEDING

The emergencies are over. As our current president might put it, it’s a war of attrition now. His administration hasn’t made anything worse—and we have to admit that early on his ease and confidence were like a balm. But he hasn’t made anything better, either. If not fully tired of him, the public has grown as fatalistic about the Republicans’ ability to make any real difference as it already was about the Democrats’. The two-party system had been in trouble for decades. It was rigid, polarizing, and unrepresentative. The parties were pawns of special interests. The one interest group they neglected was the vast center of the American electorate, which kept seeking split-the-difference policies. Eight years of failure from two administrations have finally blown apart the tired duopoly. The hopes of our nation are bleeding away along with our few remaining economic resources.

Here is the challenge:

- Our country no longer controls its economic fundamentals.

- Compared with the America of the past, it has become stagnant, classbound, and brutally unfair.

³² For “high-altitude, low-opening” parachute jump. The jumpers leave the plane at 30,000 feet, free-fall for nearly two minutes, and open their chutes at 1,000 feet, a few seconds before impact. Because the airplanes are so high, they cannot be seen or heard from the ground; and the jumpers spend almost no time with their chutes visibly deployed.

■ Compared with the rest of the world, it is on the way down. We think we are a great power—and our military is still ahead of China's. Everyone else thinks that over the past twenty years we finally pushed our luck too far.

To deal with these problems once in office, we must point out basic truths in the campaign.

These truths involve the past sources of our growth: savings, investment, education, innovation. We've thrown away every one of these advantages. What we would do right now to have back the \$1 trillion that Congress voted away in 2008 with the Freedom From Death Tax Act!³³ A relatively small share of that money might have kept our aerospace programs competitive with Europe's³⁴—to say nothing of preparing us for advances in other forms of transportation. A little more might have made our road and highway system at least as good as China's.³⁵ With what was left over, our companies might have been able to compete with Germany's in producing the superfast, quiet, efficient maglev trains that are now doing for travel what the jet plane did in the 1950s. Even if we couldn't afford to make the trains, with more money at least some of our states and regions might have been able to buy them, instead of just looking enviously at what China, India, and Iran have done.³⁶

Or we could have shored up our universities. True, the big change came as early as 2002, in the wake of 9/11, when tighter visa rules, whatever their effect on reducing terrorism, cut off the flow of foreign talent that American

universities had channeled to American ends.³⁷ In the summer of 2007 China applied the name "twenty Harvards" to its ambition, announced in the early 2000s, to build major research institutions that would attract international talent. It seemed preposterous (too much political control, too great a language barrier), but no one is laughing now. The Chinese mission to Mars, with astronauts from Pakistan, Germany, and Korea, indicates the scope of China's scientific ambition. And necessity has pushed China into the lead in computerized translation technology, so that foreign students can read Chinese characters. The Historic Campus of our best-known university, Harvard, is still prestigious worldwide. But its role is increasingly that of the theme park, like Oxford or Heidelberg, while the most ambitious students compete for fellowships at the Har-Bai and Har-Bei campuses in Mumbai and Beijing. These, of course, have become each other's main rivals—whether for scores on the World Ingenuity Test or in the annual meeting of the teams they sponsor at the Rose Bowl.

Or we could at last have begun to grapple with health-care costs. We've managed to create the worst of all worlds—what the Democrats call the "30-30 problem." Thirty percent of our entire economy goes for health and medical costs,³⁸ but 30 percent of our citizens have no regular contact with the medical system. (Except, of course, during quarantines in avian-flu season.) For people who can afford them, the "tailored therapies" of the past decade represent the biggest breakthrough in medicine since antibiotics or anesthesia. The big killers—heart disease and cancers of the colon, lung, breast, and prostate—are now manageable chronic diseases at worst, and the big moral issues involve the question of whether Baby Boomers are living "too long." But the costs are astronomical, which raises questions of both efficiency and justice. Google's embedded diagnostic technology dramatizes our problem: based on nonstop biometric testing of the thirty-seven relevant enzymes and organ-output levels, it pipes into cell-phone implants instructions for which treatment, pill, or action to take next. The system is extremely popular—for the 10 million people who can afford it. NetJet flights to the Bahamas for organ replacement illustrate the point even more sharply, although here the breakthrough was less medical than diplomatic. The World Trade Organization, after the most contentious proceeding in its history, ruled that prohibiting commerce in human organs for transplant was an unjust trade barrier. The ruling may have caused the final, fatal split in the Republican Party (libertarians were jubilant, religious conservatives appalled), but it became the foundation of an important Caribbean industry after threats of violence dissuaded many transplant centers from operating within the United States. Meanwhile, despite

³³ In the spring of 2005 the Congressional Joint Committee on Taxation estimated that ending the estate tax would directly cut federal revenue by \$72 billion in 2015. Other groups calculated that the total impact on the budget, including higher interest payments on a larger federal debt, would be \$100 billion a year, or \$1 trillion over a decade. All this tax relief flowed to the wealthiest one percent of Americans.

³⁴ In 1990 the American aerospace industry employed 1,120,000 people. By 2004 that number had fallen by nearly half, to 593,000. During those same years the European aerospace industry was growing in both sales and work force. In 2003 Airbus overtook Boeing in world market share for commercial airliners.

³⁵ In 2005 the American Society of Civil Engineers released a "report card" on the state of America's infrastructure—roads, dams, bridges, aviation, and so on. The overall grade was D, with the highest mark being C+, for solid-waste handling. According to the report, the most dramatic underinvestment involved the nation's roads. Simply maintaining the roads at the same level would cost \$94 billion, the report said—or half again as much as actual yearly investment levels. Improving the roads would require about twice as much as the United States was spending.

³⁶ In 2003 the city of Shanghai opened the world's fastest maglev line, whose trains average 267 miles per hour and arrive on schedule 99.7 percent of the time. An editor's note in the *Journal of the American Society of Civil Engineers* pointed out that half a dozen maglev proposals for American cities were "stalled in one stage or another of planning, permitting, or budgeting." The result, the journal's editor observed, was this: "Traffic congestion on U.S. roads worsens, energy prices fluctuate unpredictably, and, at least for the moment, China pulls ahead of the United States on the path to a safe, reliable, fast, and efficient means of transporting passengers."

³⁷ Foreign enrollment in U.S. universities increased steadily from 1971 through 2002. It fell the next year, and has gone down ever since.

³⁸ It was under 8 percent in 1990 and under 12 percent in 2000.

the Strong America–Strong Americans Act of 2009, which tied income-tax rates to body-mass index and cigarette consumption, smoking and eating junk food have become for our underemployed class what swilling vodka was for the dispossessed in Boris Yeltsin’s Russia.

All these issues involve money, and we can’t avoid talking about money in this campaign. But your ability to address an even harder issue will largely determine whether you can succeed in the job the voters are about to give you.

That problem is the sense of sunset, decline, hopelessness. America has been so resilient as a society because each American has imagined that the sky was the limit. Obviously it was not for everyone, or always. From the beginning we’ve had a class system, and a racial-caste system, and extended periods—the 1890s, the 1930s, the 1970s, the past few years—when many more people than usual were struggling merely to survive. But the myth of equal opportunity has been closer to reality here than in any other society, and the myth itself has mattered.

My father, in explaining why it was so painful for him to see a lifetime’s savings melt away after the Venezuelan crisis, told me about a political speech he remembered from his own youth. It was by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Harvard professor who later became a politician. In the late 1960s, when American prosperity held despite bitter political turmoil, Moynihan told left-wing students why preserving that prosperity should be important even to them. We know Europe from its novels, Moynihan said: the old ones, by Austen and Dickens and Stendahl, and the more recent ones, too. We know it as a static society. Young people, seeking opportunity, have to wait for old people to die. A whole life’s prospects depend on the size of an inheritance. People know their place. America, Moynihan said fifty years ago, must never become a place like that.

That is the place we have become. Half this country’s households live on less than \$50,000 a year. That sounds like a significant improvement from the \$44,000 household median in 2003. But a year in private college now costs \$83,000, a day in a hospital \$1,350, a year in a nursing home \$150,000—and a gallon of gasoline \$9. Thus we start off knowing that for half our people there is no chance—none—of getting ahead of the game. And really, it’s more like 80 percent of the public that is priced out of a chance for future opportunity. We have made a perfect circle—perfect in closing off options. There are fewer attractive jobs to be had, even though the ones at the top, for financiers or specialty doctors, are very attractive indeed. And those who don’t start out with advantages in getting those jobs have less and less chance of moving up to them.

Jobs in the middle of the skill-and-income distribution have steadily vanished if any aspect of them can be

done more efficiently in China, India, or Vietnam. The K–12 schools, the universities, the ambitious research projects that could help the next generation qualify for better jobs, have weakened or dried up.³⁹ A dynamic economy is always losing jobs. The problem with ours is that we’re no longer any good at creating new ones. America is a less attractive place for new business because it’s a less attractive place, period.⁴⁰

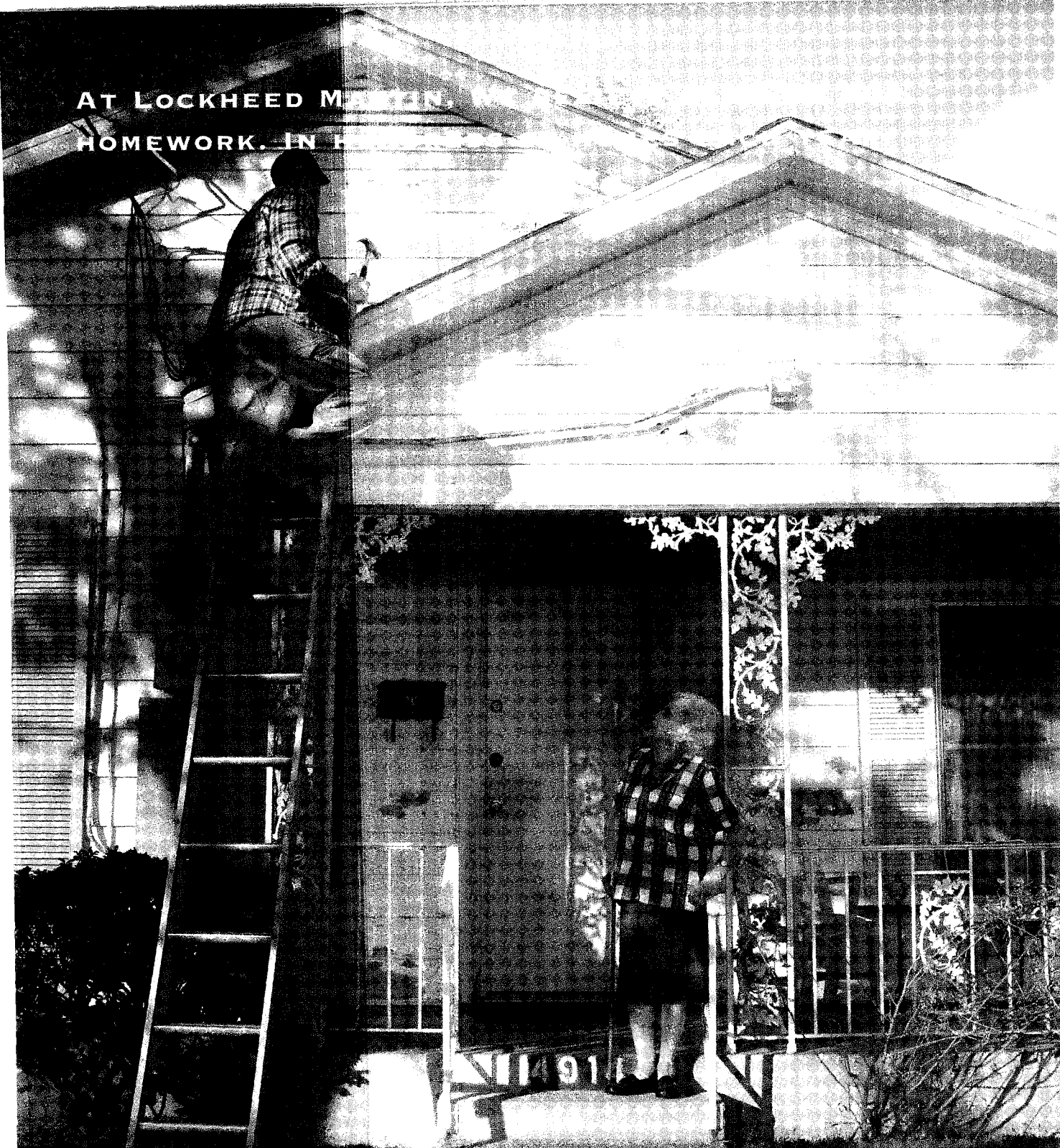
In the past decade we’ve seen the telephone companies disappear. Programming, data, entertainment, conversation—they all go over the Internet now. Pharmaceuticals are no longer mass-produced but, rather, tailored to each patient’s genetic makeup. The big airlines are all gone now, and much of publishing, too. The *new* industries are the ones we want. When their founders are deciding where to locate, though, they’ll see us as a country with a big market—and with an undereducated work force, a rundown infrastructure, and a shaky currency. They’ll see England as it lost its empire. They’ll see Russia without the oil reserves, Brezhnev’s Soviet Union without the repression. They’ll see the America that Daniel Patrick Moynihan feared.

This story is now yours to tell, and later I’ll turn to notes for the stump speech. But remember that the reality of the story reaches backward, and that is why I have concentrated on the missed opportunities, the spendthrift recklessness, the warnings America heard but tuned out. To tell it that way in public would of course only make things worse, and we can’t afford the recriminations or the further waste of time. The only chance for a new beginning is to make people believe there actually is a chance. ▀

³⁹ It’s hard to remember or even to believe, but not that long ago the school system was a valuable social equalizer. More important, it was seen that way. Through the three golden decades, from the late 1940s (when the GI Bill kicked in) to the late 1970s (when Proposition 13 passed in California), the federal government and the states put more money than ever before into elementary schools, high schools, and universities. More students than ever before finished high school; more finished college; more felt they could go further than their parents had. Proposition 13 was the California ballot measure that cut property taxes by 30 percent and then capped their future growth. It prefigured the federal tax cuts of the early 2000s, because it pushed the level of revenue below its historic “band.” Before Proposition 13 California’s per capita spending on public schools was high, like Connecticut’s or New York’s. Twenty years later it was well below the national average, just ahead of Arkansas’s.

⁴⁰ In the early 2000s one third of American public high school students failed to graduate on time. Niels Christian Nielsen, a member of several corporate boards in Europe and the United States, said at the University of California in 2005, “The big difference between Europe and America is the proportion of people who come out of the system really not being functional for any serious role. In Finland that is maybe two or three percent. For Europe in general maybe fifteen or twenty. For the United States at least thirty percent, maybe more. In spite of all the press, Americans don’t really get the education difference. They generally still feel this is a well-educated country and work force. They just don’t see how far the country is falling behind.”

James Fallows, a national correspondent for The Atlantic, has written three cover stories on U.S. foreign policy and Iraq: “Bush’s Lost Year” (October 2004), “Blind Into Baghdad” (January/February 2004), and “The Fifty-first State?” (November 2002). The accompanying illustrations are photo collages composed by John Ritter using parts of news photos (courtesy of AP Photo and Reuters) in combination with his own.



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BY BENJAMIN M. FRIEDMAN

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Would it really be so bad if living standards in the United States stagnated—or even declined somewhat—for a decade or two? It might well be worse than most people imagine. History suggests that the quality of our democracy—more fundamentally, the moral character of American society—would be at risk if we experienced a many-year downturn. As the distinguished economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron once observed, even a country with a long democratic history can become a “democracy without democrats.” Merely being rich is no bar to a society’s retreat into rigidity and intolerance once enough of its citizens sense that they are no longer getting ahead.

American history includes several episodes in which stagnating or declining incomes over an extended period have undermined the nation’s tolerance and threatened citizens’ freedoms. One that is especially vivid, and that touched many aspects of American life that remain contentious today, occurred during the Populist era, toward the end of the nineteenth century—roughly from 1880 through the middle of the 1890s.

For a decade and a half after the Civil War, economic growth was largely exuberant, society optimistic, and social progress undeniable. But all that changed over the next fifteen years, beginning with a faltering economy. From 1880 to 1890 Americans’ real per capita income grew on average by just 0.4 percent a year (versus almost four percent in the 1870s). Then, after a few strong years at the start of the 1890s, the economy collapsed altogether. A severe banking panic set off a steep downturn, widely known at the time as the Great Depression. By the end of 1893, 500 banks and 15,000 other businesses, including several major railroads, were bankrupt. Prices, especially farm prices, had been falling even when the economy was growing strongly. Now the declines became ruinous. Wheat dropped from an average price of \$1.12 a bushel in the early 1870s to fifty cents or less in the mid-1890s, and corn went from forty-eight cents a bushel to twenty-one. By the early 1890s farmers in some western states were burning their nearly worthless corn for fuel. By 1895 per capita income had fallen below the level it had reached fifteen years earlier.

Popular discontent followed economic distress. In 1892 labor action against the Carnegie Steel plant in Homestead, Pennsylvania, sparked

an armed battle between striking workers and company-hired Pinkerton forces, leaving sixteen dead and more than 150 wounded. Two years later a strike against the Pullman Sleeping Car Company led President Grover Cleveland to call in the Army to protect the railroads. At the same time, hundreds of unemployed men, led by Ohio businessman Jacob Coxey (the group was known as “Coxey’s Army”), marched on Washington to demand federal assistance. Altogether, during the course of 1894 seventeen such “industrial armies” marched on the capital.

But economic concerns did not manifest themselves only, or even primarily, in labor marches and job riots; they soured many aspects of American society. As wages fell and unemployment rose, fearful citizens sought to close the country to newcomers—particularly from areas other than northwestern Europe. The new Statue of Liberty (completed in 1886) may have proclaimed America’s welcome to the world’s “huddled masses” and “wretched refuse,” but such popular magazines of the day as *Harper’s* and *The Atlantic Monthly* were full of ethnic jokes and slurs. Beginning in the 1880s hard times catalyzed a movement to tighten immigration standards. In 1882, after riots protesting the use of Chinese labor for railroad construction, Congress barred Chinese immigrants entirely. All other immigrants were subject to a head tax. Some states adopted legislation prohibiting certain noncitizens from acquiring land.

Race relations also deteriorated. In a spectacularly unfortunate coincidence that would affect American history for decades, this period of economic stagnation—the worst up to that time—set in just as Reconstruction ended and the federal government finally withdrew its troops from the defeated southern states. No one will ever know whether the country’s race relations, both in the South and elsewhere, would have taken a different course had America enjoyed robust economic growth during this period. In the event, the result was segregation by race in practically every aspect of daily life, together with appalling racial violence.

One reason for believing that economic frustrations contributed to the sad history that followed is that although the former Confederate states regained full political independence with the end of Reconstruction, in 1879, most of them

Benjamin M. Friedman is a professor of economics at Harvard. This article is drawn from his forthcoming book, The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth, to be published by Knopf in October.

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did not begin to adopt what in time became pervasive “Jim Crow” laws until the 1890s. By the end of that decade most southern states had made it illegal for blacks to ride with whites in railroad cars, and some had also segregated city streetcars and railroad-station waiting rooms. The devices used to deny most black citizens their voting rights—property and literacy requirements, poll taxes, and white-only primaries—were likewise adopted mostly in the 1890s or after.

But the legal changes enacted during this period barely capture the racist and anti-immigrant (and anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, anti-ethnic) sentiment of the time. The 1880s saw a rise in vigilante violence in rural areas—not only lynchings in the former Confederacy but also beatings, murders, and arson by such groups as the Bald Knobbers, in the Ozarks, and the White Caps, in Kentucky and elsewhere. Such colorful populist figures as “Pitchfork” Ben Tillman, who served as governor of South Carolina from 1890 to 1894 and then as a U.S. senator, and Tom Watson, a widely read newspaperman who ran for vice president on the Populist ticket in 1896, were outspoken white supremacists. Tillman publicly defended lynching, called for the repeal of the Fifteenth Amendment (which had given the vote to blacks), and advocated the use of force to disenfranchise blacks in the

History is replete with instances in which a turn away from openness and tolerance, often accompanied by a weakening of democratic institutions, has followed economic stagnation.

meantime. Watson’s speeches and editorials were regularly devoted to sensational attacks on blacks, Catholics, Jews, and foreigners. The American Protective Association, an anti-Catholic organization founded in Iowa in 1887, spread rapidly once the 1893 depression began, and claimed to have 2.5 million members nationwide by the mid-1890s. Anti-Semitic propaganda was so common among Populists by 1896 that William Jennings Bryan felt obliged to disavow it during his campaign for the presidency.

Steps that would have made America more democratic were not without advocates during this period. Many Populists favored such measures as direct primaries and the popular election of U.S. senators. Some also favored women’s suffrage. Bryan was a tireless advocate for all these causes. Yet none of them advanced in the face of prolonged economic stagnation. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court only made matters worse. In two key decisions it effectively gutted the Civil Rights Act passed in 1875 (when economic growth was strong), declaring private racial segregation and then segregation legislated by the states to be consti-

tutionally protected. Throughout the Populist era America’s media, politics, and legislation all lent support to cultural exclusion, societal rigidity, and efforts to turn back the clock. These ultimately proved futile, but for a while they poisoned both politics and society. Openness toward the future, faith in a better society for all, and support for the rights of minorities were simply not the order of the day.

Economic weakness does not always produce social regress, of course; history is not so deterministic. The depression of the 1930s led, for the most part, to a reaffirmation of America’s openness and generosity. But that was atypical; the Populist era was more the norm.

When slow growth together with widening inequality halted improvements in living standards for many Americans in the 1920s, the upshot was the revival of the Ku Klux Klan (not just in the South—at the Klan’s peak perhaps one in ten white Protestant U.S. men was a member), the tightest and most discriminatory immigration restrictions in the nation’s history, and the elimination of both federal and state laws designed to protect women and children. Similar economic conditions in the 1970s and 1980s provided the backdrop for another round of anti-immigrant agitation, the rise of the right-wing militia movement, and incidents of politically motivated domestic terrorism.

Not just in America but in the other Western democracies, too, history is replete with instances in which a turn away from openness and tolerance, often accompanied by a weakening of democratic institutions, has followed economic stagnation. The most familiar example is the rise of Nazism in Germany, following that country’s economic chaos in the 1920s and then the onset of worldwide depression in the early 1930s. But in Britain such nasty episodes as the repression of the suffragette movement under Asquith, the breaking of Lloyd George’s promises to the returning World War I veterans, and the bloody Fascist riots in London’s East End all occurred under severe economic distress. So did the ascension of the extremist Boulangist movement in late-nineteenth-century France, and the *Action Française* movement after World War I. Conversely, in both America and Europe fairness and tolerance have increased, and democratic institutions have strengthened, mostly when the average citizen’s standard of living has been rising.

The reason is not hard to understand. When their living standards are rising, people do not view themselves, their fellow citizens, and their society as a whole the way they do when those standards are stagnant or falling. They are more trusting, more inclusive, and more open to change when they view their future prospects and their children’s with confidence rather than anxiety or fear. Economic growth is not merely the enabler of higher consumption; it is in many ways the wellspring from which democracy and civil society flow. We should be fully cognizant of the risks to our values and liberties if that nourishing source runs dry. ■

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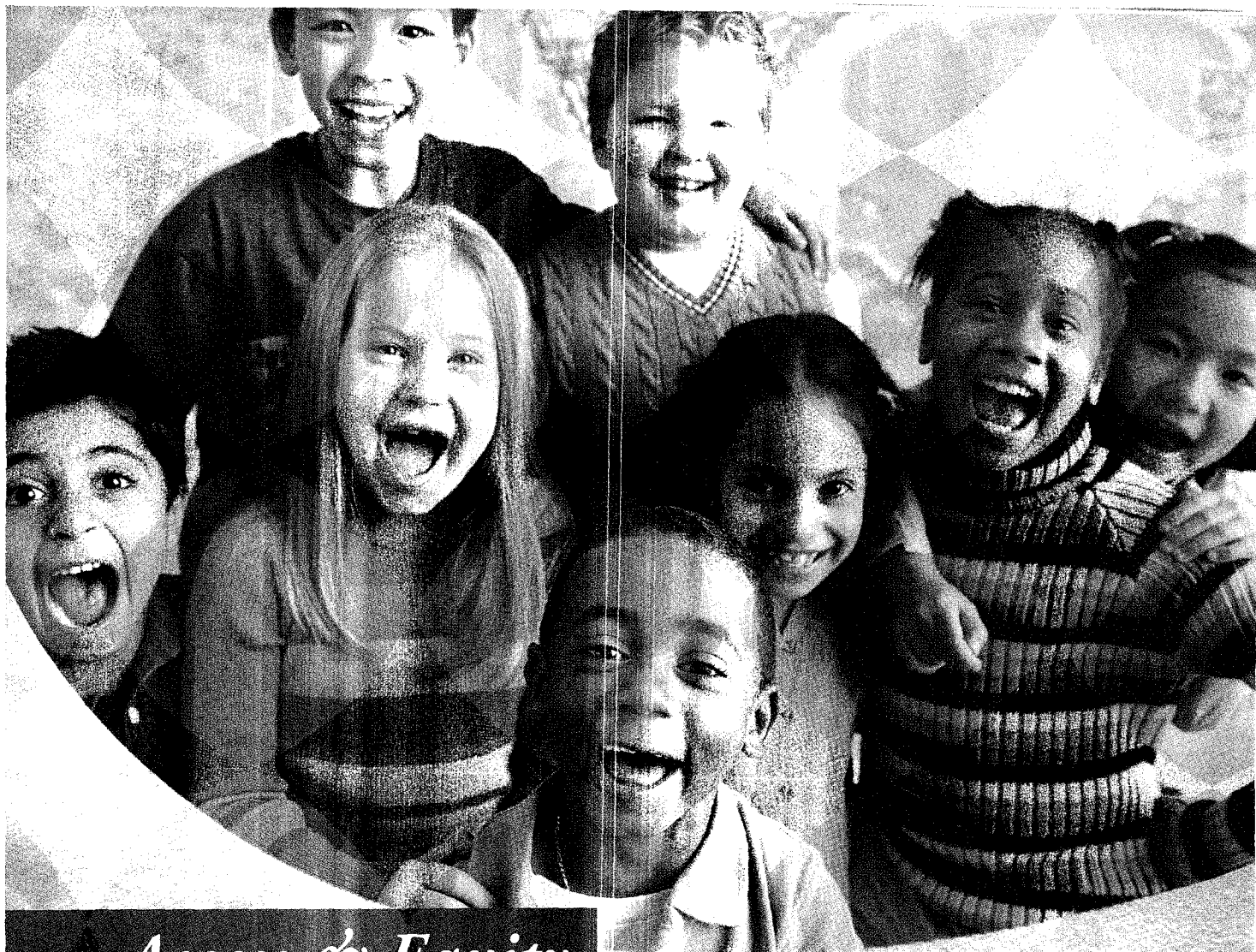
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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF TOCQUEVILLE

Death row and a brothel in Las Vegas; a pilot's lecture on creationism; genealogy and the Mormons; higher learning in Austin; a gun show in Fort Worth; and the rain-struck opening of the Clinton Library

BY BERNARD-HENRI LEVY



THE PRISON BUSINESS

Death row in the Southern Nevada Women's Correctional Center, in North Las Vegas, has only one inmate when I visit: Priscilla Ford, a seventy-five-year-old black woman found guilty of having deliberately run over twenty-nine pedestrians twenty-four years ago in Reno, killing seven, as she drove her Lincoln at full speed.

Be careful, the state's director of prisons told me. She is sick. Very sick. Emphysema. Can't get up or talk to you.

But in fact, that's not how it is. She is tired, of course. Short of breath. Wearing a dirty jogging suit. Shaggy gray hair, with a bald spot at the back of her skull. She is standing up, pretty straight. Welcomes me gravely into her tiny cell, plastered with photos of Prince William, Lady Di, President Bush, Pope John Paul II, Mel Gibson. A book on children's education near her bed. *The Da Vinci Code* and a Bible on a shelf. A television set. A sign that says COD FIRST. Family photos she doesn't appear in, except by means of a rough and clumsy paste-up.

"I hope my girlfriends didn't scare you too much," she begins, alluding to the hundred or so women, almost all of them black, in the "segregation" section you need to go through to get to her cell—genuine raging beasts, all dressed

in the same brightly colored jumpers, and shouting behind their bars that they haven't done anything, that they can't bear it anymore, that they want to be allowed to exercise, that they screw visitors, that I should go to hell.

Then, shaken by strange bursts of laughter, a hiccup of sorts, that double her over every time, cut off her breath, and make me think that the expert psychiatric opinion given at her trial that she was suffering from paranoid schizophrenia wasn't completely without foundation, Priscilla continues, "I was wrong to confess. I didn't do anything. I was charged because I had a terrible lawyer who couldn't convince the jury that I'm the reincarnation of Christ himself. The real guilty one, here she is [she shows me a photo pinned upside down, all by itself on a gold-painted cork board]: she's the real guilty one. She's my sister. She's still on the run, and that's why there are still crimes being committed in Reno."

Bernard-Henri Lévy is a writer and philosopher who lives in Paris. He is the author of many books, including Barbarism With a Human Face, Who Killed Daniel Pearl?, and War, Evil, and the End of History. This is the third of several articles.

And then, finally, in response to my questions about the ordeal it must be to wake up every morning for twenty years and tell yourself that this could be the last day, she makes a remark whose sudden brilliance settles in three sentences the debate on the merits of the network of private prisons that this penitentiary

had belonged to since its creation, as against the “normal” public system that it has just joined in the past few days, after a controversy that inflamed passions throughout the state: “For me, there’s a before and an after. Before, I was living like a dog, no one cared about me, but the advantage was that they no longer thought about executing me. Today the food is better, the cell is cleaner, but I think they’re going to come looking for me ...”

In a few words she expressed the core idea.

Priscilla Ford is cut off from everything, and, in the twenty years since she was condemned, has received almost no visits.

But she has summarized one of the crucial issues that divide the country today, about which the Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz talked with me at length in New York—she is expressing the advantages and inconveniences of the privatization of American prisons as I had been able to glimpse them myself, in a visit that preceded my meeting with her.

The positive side: An apathy in the behavior of the prison guards, which I imagine is an offspring of this culture of private enterprise that was the rule until last month. A certain casualness, almost freedom, in the way the prisoners (except, of course, the ones in the segregation sector) walk around in the hallways, talking, pausing if they want, and in the way they are dressed. Mini stereo systems in some cells, and sometimes television sets; beauty parlors with posters of different hairstyles, just as in provincial hair salons; even the color on the walls of the common rooms—pink or mauve or blue—whose affected cheerfulness could be that of a kindergarten. Behind all this you can imagine the shareholders of Corrections Corporation of America, which had run the prison, coolly calculating that feeding and entertaining the human animal, loosening the bit a little, offering a less sinister environment than the punitive cells of a state prison, is an affordable way—less costly, at any rate, than armies of prison guards—to keep a prisoner quiet and tame.

The negative side: The abandonment, when the state resigns and the law of profit reigns, of any kind of reform project. These outcast men—or in this case women—whom the body politic, and thus the community of citizens, may forget to punish, but with whom, at the same time, they have utterly lost contact. This is the height of abandonment, the most absolute dereliction. Bodies are fed but morally beaten; souls are suspended and literally lost in the bright shadows of these sweetish dungeons. Snuffing of human light; residual subhumanity; fundamentally, the completion of the gesture of exclusion and elimination that began at Rikers Island, that I sensed yet again at Alcatraz, but that finds here, in this withdrawal of public authority, in this programmed indifference of the community to its delinquents and monsters, probably its most complete form.

Between the plague and cholera it’s never easy to

choose. And it’s clear that when we contemplate the horror of Priscilla Ford’s case, when we’re faced with this hopeless scandal—the fact that thirty-eight states, including Nevada, maintain the death penalty—all other debates over the American prison system seem almost frivolous. Still, there are, at times, degrees of evil. And I fear that with this debate about privatization, with the very existence of prisons subject only to the logic of money, we have taken one more decisive step on the path to civilized barbarism.

THE LAW OF THE BROTHELS

For brothels you have to leave Las Vegas and Clark County. You have to head west, toward Death Valley. Leave Blue Diamond and its mines on your right. Go to Pahrump. Pass Pahrump’s castle-shaped Kingdom Gentlemen’s Club and Madam Butterfly’s Bath and Massage Parlor. Leave the town. Get lost. Come back. Ask your way from a bunch of kids playing in front of a billboard that in the middle of the desert is advertising an edition of the Bible. Ask your way again farther on, opposite the Green Valley Grocery, from a group of mothers stocking up on Coca-Cola and not the least bit surprised at having to provide a stranger with directions to the nearest brothel. Take a left. Pass a bar that seems to cater to war veterans, a motel, an antique shop, all perched on loose gravel. Look for the “guns and supplies” store the moms happened to mention. Then the South Valley Baptist Church, near a horse pen. Emerging from a steep slope, a rocky moon-scape bleached by the sun, arrive at a crossroads where I’d swear no one ever passes but where a man is standing, holding a sign he has scribbled: VIETNAM VET, NO WORK, NO FOOD, GOD BLESS! With his long gray hair, his emaciated face, his dusty T-shirt, he has the eerie, almost alien look of a survivor from another world that poor and homeless people in these youth-elixir-drugged lands of California and Nevada end up acquiring. And finally, about 500 feet farther on, in the middle of nowhere but firmly within Nye County (which of all the counties in Nevada that tolerate prostitution is the closest to Las Vegas), you come upon a pink-and-blue kiosk marked TOURIST INFORMATION, SHIRTS, HATS, SOUVENIRS; a billboard boasting the inevitable WORLD FAMOUS HISTORIC BROTHEL; and then—as incongruous as the Eiffel Tower in the middle of a savannah—a house like Snow White’s divided into a saloon on the right, with the sign LONGHORN BAR, and a bizarre façade on the left, decorated above with windows in pastel colors and at ground level with three garishly painted murals. The murals reproduce lifelike scenes supposedly taking place on this very site: a John Wayne double pushing open in a manly way the door that I myself am about to push; another man leaning imposingly on the counter of the bar I’m about to enter; and a cowgirl, daydreaming, very much an icon of the Eternal Great West, posing on a fence identical to the one I’m passing through.

Walk through the Longhorn Bar, where a sign informs you that LADIES ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.

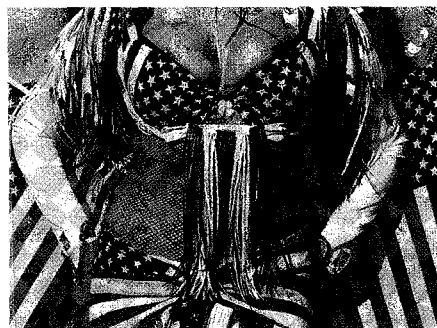
Pause in front of a TV that's showcasing *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, whose message is that whores are good little girls too.

Express surprise to the manager that no one's here, and get told that the bar, like the brothel, has its peak hours later on, when customers arrive from Las Vegas.

Finally, step into the brothel itself, the Chicken Ranch—thus named because during the nineteenth century, at its original location in Texas, the neighboring ranchers paid with chickens. It has a concealed door, falsely mysterious, imitation of a hotel hallway, phantom of the “lush” Duk Duk Ranch where Quilty takes Lolita and has her perform “filthy,

A bit lower down, just at the head of the bed and of the client, a statuette of the Statue of Liberty, in homage to the dear, suffering America honored here by screwing, as it is honored elsewhere by intelligence, business, arts, weapons. *Whores are first and foremost American patriots.*

And then, finally, her catalogue of services and prices, which she announces to me with the same pride showed by the matchmaker in the Mall of America when she displayed her menu of weddings. I suddenly remember that in the lounge there is an ATM, along with brochures certifying that credit-card payments are accepted. I think of the business cards with mail and Internet addresses, the maps, the cards for twenty-four-hour-a-day limousine service next to a box of mints. I remember, to the left of the entrance



Finally, out in the Nevada desert, you come upon a pink-and-blue kiosk marked TOURIST INFORMATION, SOUVENIRS; a billboard boasting the inevitable WORLD FAMOUS HISTORIC BROTHEL; and then—as incongruous as the Eiffel Tower in the middle of a savannah—a house like Snow White's.

fancy” deeds; through the door is a seedy lounge, upholstered in burgundy velvet, where a wheezing electric system is triggered whenever a client enters, and a theater curtain is raised, revealing a mirrored wall.

There are four of them—not as young as the lap dancers I saw in Vegas, not as sexy. A touch of the country girl, with permed hair, rosy rustic features, flesh squeezed into corsets you can make out beneath the flounced dresses. One after another they curtsy, pull in their stomachs, wriggle, and smile.

Of the four I choose the least pathetic one. Follow her to the end of another hallway to a bedroom hung with makeshift drapes, which she proudly tells me is decorated “like a harem.”

Notice surprise in her eyes, a glint of fleeting fear, and then indifference when she understands that I have come not for that but for a magazine, Tocqueville, sex in America, and so forth.

And still, in the meantime, store up impressions and information.

Next to the bed is a message board like the temperature charts in hospital rooms, where every other week the results of venereal-disease and AIDS tests are written. *The brothel is a sanitary place.*

On the bedside table, conspicuously displayed, a choice of condoms, the use of which is required at all levels of service, down to and including, she gravely explains, a mere striptease. *The brothel is a place of safe sex.*

gate and its few steps, the ramp designed for handicapped access. *Brothel or no brothel, business is business.*

Protestant ethic and price list for love.

New sexual order, tests, performances.

Another face of the same puritanism and its obscene nether side.

CREATIONISM, THEY SAY ...

“There are two theories,” the helicopter pilot shouts when I ask him about the geological formation of the formidable Grand Canyon, which we’re beginning to glimpse after an hour of flight over a landscape of deserts and dormant volcanoes, dried-up lakes and the Hoover Dam, on Lake Mead.

“There are two theories,” he repeats, louder, to overcome the noise of the helicopter’s rotors and engine. One claims it emerged little by little, during millions or even billions of years, as it became eroded. And the other claims that all this, all these wonders, these monuments as magnificent as the temples of Angkor Wat, these red and pink rocks you see below you, that formation, on your left, that looks like a Roman temple, this other one, here, look, right here, that looks like a ruined fortress—that all this can’t be the result of chance, that it needed an artist, and that this artist is God.

And then, a few minutes later, when we’re a little higher than the rim itself, and above the dizzying chasm: “And there are two theories here, too.” One says it’s the Colorado River that carved the rift over the course of millennia. The

other says no, that's impossible: such a ravine, such a colossal gorge, such a clear-cut, perfect canyon, where geologists have found so many amazingly preserved fossils, this scar that runs in one stroke without deviating for 300 miles—all this could only have been produced all at once. Maybe not in one day, but in a year, maybe two, after a cataclysm like the flood in the Bible.

The pilot isn't yet thirty. He is modern. Thin and bright. With his Ray-Bans, his longish hair, his handsome young face and ruddy complexion, he doesn't bear much resemblance to the people I saw at Willow Creek. And soon, when we return to Vegas, he'll confess that he's a Democrat, that he's getting ready to vote for John Kerry, and that he's a fan of "R&B" and "dance-floor techno-pop." But he has just drawn an exact sketch of this phenomenon called creationism, whose importance to the new American conservative thought, regardless of political party, is one of the strangest, most extravagant things ever offered for a foreign traveler to observe.

There was a time when creationists were pure ideo-

There are two theories, the pilot repeats, louder, to overcome the noise of the helicopter. One claims the Grand Canyon emerged during millions of years, as it became eroded. The other claims that all this can't be the result of chance, that it needed an artist, and this artist is God.

logues, content to take up the old arguments of Darwin's contemporaries: How, if man is descended from an animal, is it possible to endow him with a soul and to bestow upon that soul the immortality postulated by different religions? This was the time, 1925, of the famous "monkey trial," when a court in Tennessee found a high school teacher guilty of daring to teach that man and monkey were genetic cousins. It was the era, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, when a number of American states instituted amendments forbidding the teaching of Darwinism in the schools. It was the time, in short, of the battle between faith and science—and the latter was often ordered to give in to the former.

Today the strategy has been refined. It has even, upon close inspection, been reversed. For instead of opposing science; instead of making a stand against the scientific spirit and its methods; instead, in short, of contrasting a soulless science with the eternal human soul and natural theology, the creationist camp has had the clever idea of fitting itself into the adversary's mold, borrowing science's procedures and effects, and also starting to speak in the name of science. That's the story of the scholar Jonathan Wells, recipient of a Ph.D. from Yale and then from Berkeley, who under the influence of the Moonies developed a teleology of the

history of species demonstrating that their succession corresponds to an "intelligent design." That's the story of the Moonies in general, who thirty years ago, with the support of the Nobel Prize winner and spiritualist John Eccles, established a series of International Conferences for the Unity of the Sciences, one object of which was to undermine the theoretical foundations of Darwinism. Today an array of organizations use a vast arsenal of diplomas, validations, scholarly communications, and scientific commissions for the purpose of their crusade, worthy of a great modern scientific institution. In seemingly scholarly journals a plethora of paleontologists and geologists—or people who claim to be such—are turning out articles aiming to call into question the theory of the primeval soup, to recalculate the age of Earth and the solar system, to discover the remains of Noah's ark, to date with carbon-14 the fossil-bearing layers, or to discover the "actual date" of the Flood. In the end it's none other than our young pilot who, having returned to the Vegas heliport, explains, with the same self-assurance,

that there are two theories, too, about the origin of Earth ...

This neo-creationism no longer presses to exclude Darwinism from textbooks and schools altogether. It no longer tries to dismiss it in the name of a divine knowledge that is imposed on the knowledge of scholars with the authority of fanaticism or revealed truth.

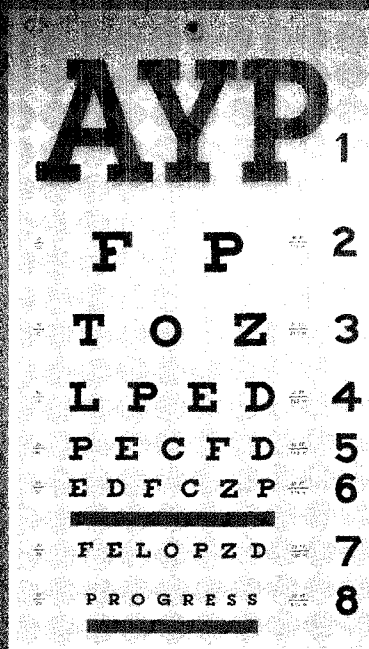
On the contrary, it accepts Darwinism, or in any case pretends to accept it—but only while asserting the right, the mere right, to oppose its "hypotheses" with the contrary hypotheses, placed on the same level and equal in worth, of "scientific creationism." The invention of scientific creationism—this elevation to the rank of "science" of what is patently superstition and imposture—can only be called inspired.

There are two theories, and you have a choice: that's the formula of an enlightened obscurantism; that's the principle of revisionism with a liberal and tolerant face; that's the act of faith of a dogmatism reconciled with freedom of speech and thought; that's the subtlest, most underhanded, most cunning, and at bottom most dangerous ideological maneuver of the American right in years.

THE MORMON MASTERSTROKE

About the significance of religion in American democratic life; about the peculiarity of systematically placing these election campaigns, these debates, these conventions, under the blessing of God Almighty; about the mystery of a people who are at once the most materialistic and the most spiritual, the "greediest" in Jim Harrison's view and the most intensely religious; about the

It's clear to see.
Three letters are making a shambles
of the *No Child Left Behind* law.



Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is supposed to gauge a school's effectiveness. Yet many schools are incorrectly labeled failures when they're actually making real academic progress. Teachers and other school staff work hard every day to help students achieve high standards. But AYP and other provisions of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) law are seriously flawed and hinder efforts to reach that goal.

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paradox of a taste for freedom that, far from having been wrested from the murky shadows of faith, as in Europe, is, on the contrary, right in step with it, freedom feeding on faith, faith supporting itself on freedom, and so on ad infinitum—about all this, I don't think the traveler today can have anything to add to the miraculously prophetic pages of the second volume of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

Salt Lake City, though, is an exception.

Case in point: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, otherwise known as the Mormon Church, which has its spiritual center here, and which, I must confess, looks like nothing I've ever seen before.

I'm not talking about Salt Lake City itself, this surreal and artificial place, orthogonal and rigid, built in the nineteenth century in the middle of the desert by a Mormon colony fleeing persecution.

I'm not talking, this Sunday morning, as I visit the Tabernacle and then the Mormon temple in Temple Square, about this uneasy mixture of the prophetic and the mundane, the intensity of fervor and the triviality of rites, which after all is not so different from what I witnessed at Willow Creek.

I'm not talking about the sectarian obsession—the Golden Section, or the five-branched cross, engraved on the temple walls, the rationalized occultism, the spiritualist puritanism (and, at its most extreme, the apocalyptic fantasies compelling believers to stock freezers with loads of provisions in expectation of the Last Day); this is not so exceptional, and in any case the Mormon Church maintains she has put much of this behind.

I think a certain respect is owed to this relentless Mormon interest in one's ancestors, this wish to be, as Baudelaire writes, the living tomb of one's forefathers. How can you possibly fight a church that reigns not just over the living but also over the dead?

I'm not even thinking of the living prophet—yes, "living prophet"—which is what in Salt Lake City they call the spiritual head of the community, the man who rules over the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as well as the millions of Mormons in Utah and throughout the world. I'm not even thinking, then, of my astonishment when, at the noontime service, in what looks like a luxurious hotel lobby (velvets, gilding, chandeliers, brocades) transformed into a place of worship—another sign of the same confusion of the profane with the sacred—I was finally shown the prophet; and instead of the holy man I was expecting, instead of a dignified heir to Joseph Smith, the church's founder, whom I had imagined as an apostolic figure come to re-establish

the plenitude of the Gospel on earth, I discovered a little ninety-four-year-old man, cautious and dapper, dressed in a double-breasted navy-blue suit with gold buttons, closer to a Cinzano drinker than to a WASP Dalai Lama.

No. The real story here is at 35 North West Temple Street—the Family History Library.

The genuine interest, in my eyes, of this Mormon Church is a procedure *unique in history, not just among American churches but among all churches*, which consists in traveling all over the world in order to assemble and store up the names of human beings from throughout the centuries.

"We take everything," the librarian tells me. Everything. Birth certificates. Marriage and death certificates. Newspapers. Old letters. Photos. Civil and parish registers. Military papers. Ancestral diagrams. Family trees. Censuses. Land registries. Immigration and emigration lists. Court reports. We have emissaries who travel the planet. We have "microfilm teams" who go sign deals and collect material. The result is a unique data bank. It's a supply of billions of names entered in our International Genealogical Index and preserved here in the library as well as, for security purposes, in a place twenty-five miles southeast of the city, in the heart of Granite Mountain, in fortified rooms hollowed out of the mountainside, guaranteed earthquake-proof. Someday the dead from every era will be entered into the computer. Someday a history of humanity will be indexed and available for any living person who wants it. Come look. You'll understand.

He takes me to the second floor, to a room where a few dozen men and women, of every age and condition, are typing away on individual computers.

"There you are. This belongs to everyone." These resources have no other purpose than to be put back into the hands of their legitimate owners, the people. They can do one of two things with them: If they're Mormon and if they believe in the definitive sanctity of family relations, for this life and the next, they can

tighten the link with their ancestors and even, in some cases, if they think ancestors might have died without having had the occasion or the time to accept the tenets of Mormonism, they can offer them a remedial session and baptize them by proxy. Or if they're not Mormon, if they don't believe in baptizing the dead, if this blessing of the dead isn't part of their theology, they still have the possibility, so relevant in a world where more and more people are losing track of their roots, of knowing where they come from, who made them, and who they are. "Would you like to try?" he asked.

The experiment for me isn't that conclusive. In vain do I type, and retype, the names of the few ancestors I can recall; it must be that my family background lies in one of those

MAN'S MIND STRETCHED TO A NEW IDEA
NEVER RETURNS TO ITS ORIGINAL DIMENSIONS

-oliver wendell holmes

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terrae incognitae yet to yield to Mormon inspection, since the computer remains exasperatingly silent.

But I glance at the faces around me. I look at these people, dreamy or puzzled, as if drugged, sometimes the hint of a smile on their lips, journeying through the mysteries of their own past. And I hesitate between two sentiments. One is a certain respect owed to this relentless interest in one's ancestors, this homage made to the dead, this wish to be, as Baudelaire writes, the living tomb of one's forefathers. But then there's also the idea that these Mormons are peculiarly cunning. In the struggle of all against all that the history of religions has been, and in this other battle for power that I see American churches waging today, the Mormons have found the absolute weapon. How can you possibly fight a church that reigns not just over the living but also over the dead? Who can compete with people who, not content with taking possession of bodies and souls, place the memory of the world under seal?

Twenty thousand victims of the Shoah have been baptized, a non-Mormon in Salt Lake confides, by the companions of the living prophet ... Some court proceedings have been started by institutions or churches that, after all is said and done, regret having lost their own ... Yes, it's open war!

SOCIAL INSECURITY

Tracy is a bartender in a hotel restaurant in Grand Junction, Colorado, just over the Utah border, where we've stopped for the night.

She's about forty, looks like a fine, solid, happy American, trouble-free, and keeps insisting, "My life is my customers. I'm happy when they're happy."

Except when you dig down a little; when you ask her, after the last customer has left, about her work, her family, her life; when you ask her what she's doing here in this godforsaken hole, with her automatic smiles, her "Did you enjoy your meal?" or "Are you still working on it?" you discover a far less cheerful story.

A father who worked in the Utah coal mines. One day, when he was fifty, he couldn't stop coughing. He had a heart attack and never fully recovered.

A brother, also a miner, but a specialist in mine safety. "That's a cooler kind of work," she admits, "since there's the whole inspection aspect, which takes place mostly above-ground. But if a fire breaks out, or if there's an explosion, or if the roof caves in, he's the one who has to go down to bring back his men, dead or alive. Last time there were eighty dead. He had to walk through all the corpses, and we were so afraid he wouldn't come back up!"

Three other brothers, also miners. But since the coal mines are dying out, they had to move on to soda-ash mining. "And that," she goes on, "is worse. My father says you can't call it worse. But I think you can. I've seen them, my brothers, in Wyoming and Utah, working in all the soda-

ash mines of the Green River basin. And I think it's much more exhausting than coal."

And then, finally, her husband, a miner too, the most damaged of the lot, with chronic depression, unable to work at all. They are divorced. But she remembers—in the beginning, when she was pregnant with their first child—those strikes that lasted for months, when no money was coming in. *She remembers those mornings when she would awaken crying, unable to get up.*

"What is the system in America when you're sick like your husband is? In France they think Americans don't have real social security. Tell me what it's like in this case."

Tracy reflects. Concentrates. And, adopting the expression of someone who is about to embark on a long, complex explanation, borrows my notepad and begins to write down some numbers.

The husband. He benefits from the federal Medicare program for his medical needs, and also from the supplementary Medicaid program, which I understand is state-funded. He lives on \$2,000 a month, or 60 percent of his last salary, which comes, in differing proportions that she's not aware of, from the federal government, the state government, and the mining company. He is also entitled to food stamps, but she doesn't know the amount. Finally, he has a subsidized apartment that he rents for about \$250 instead of the \$600 or \$700 it's worth.

The father. Same thing for the medical care—same coverage by Medicare and Medicaid. Plus a retirement pension that in his case comes to 75 percent of his last salary. Why three quarters and not 60 percent? And why, in the same profession, two different systems? She doesn't know this either. Maybe because one is drawing money from the retirement system in Colorado and the other in Wyoming, and it changes from state to state. Or maybe because her father also subscribed to a private fund. She doesn't know.

The brothers. They're still working. During periods of unemployment they continue to be paid for fifteen or twenty weeks, but if these periods last longer than that, a private fund, provided by a church, has to take over. As to health and retirement benefits her brothers aren't so confident; they understand that the government system is on the edge of bankruptcy and that there are plans to demolish it, so they have signed up for savings accounts run by their mining company.

And what about her? Oh, her! She laughs ... She never would have thought she'd ever get a divorce. So until these past few years she never worried about it. But oh, well. She's started saving a little. She also has private health insurance. Once, when she had a minor health problem, she was treated free by a hospital run by Methodists. The fact that there's an invalid and someone with a major illness in her family also makes her eligible for a special subsidy. And then she has a young son, and that entitles her to an allowance of \$800 a month. Despite

Clinton's reduction of Aid to Families With Dependent Children? Yes, that has nothing to do with it, since I'm speaking here, she says, of a program run by the state of Utah, where we live.

In short. I don't know how much I can generalize. And I am well aware that none of the people Tracy talked to me about are among the tens of millions who constitute America's poorest and most marginal—the truly problematic category.

But in the end there are three lessons that I would draw from her story.

First, an American social-welfare system exists; it may be threatened, but it does exist.

Second, the American social-welfare system is bewilderingly complex; despite what we say in Europe, it covers the main part of the active population, but it is complicated, varies from state to state, profession to profession, person to person.

Third, the main source of complexity, and thus of misunderstanding—the profound and almost philosophical reason for such a variety of situations—stems from the mistrust of

THE MYTH OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

I remember the way we used to demonize the American Army when I was young. I remember the image we had of the My Lai kind of GI—all the makings of a brute and a fascist. And I remember the fever with which a few months ago Europeans in general and the French in particular seized on Seymour Hersh's investigations revealing the despicable crimes committed in the Iraqi prison of Abu Ghraib.

I know, of course, that in all countries in the world, and necessarily in America as well, an army has contradictory faces.

And I'm sure that the United States Air Force Academy, in Colorado Springs, which trains officers for one branch of the armed services, is not the ideal observation post from which to judge the recent evolution of the military as a whole.

But when you come down to it ...

These boys with chubby, sensible faces ...

This girl from St. Louis, Roslyn Schulte, long brown hair pulled back in a bun, beautiful, gentle, deep gaze, who went to one of the best high schools in the country ...



One cadet doesn't know the name Clausewitz but has over his bedside table a copied-out inspirational quotation from Rabbi Harold Kushner. I decide that from now on I will think twice before allowing myself to talk glibly, like too many of my fellow citizens, about the imperial American military.

the very idea of a government's centralizing all the tools of distribution in its own hands, as in France. It stems from the methodical "individualism" that, Tocqueville clearly showed, aims to leave with each individual the responsibility for his fate, or to associations chosen by each individual.

I read somewhere that social-welfare expenses per U.S. inhabitant are roughly equal to those in most European countries, including France. But this is true only if you add to the government share the contributions made by private institutions and private philanthropies.

Now, on the road again. Early in the morning, taking not the route that goes fastest from Grand Junction to Colorado Springs but, because we have a little time, the other one, Route 65, which goes through Grand Mesa and then Aspen.

Heat. Blinding, glorious light. Rust-colored ravines, scorched by the sun. Giant rocks, sprawling wherever they please, sometimes crumbling with loose stones, sometimes reaching so high up that their jagged outlines seem to overlap one another in the sky—a barrier of rock, a Great Wall of China in the middle of America.

This other cadet, who doesn't know the name Clausewitz but who has over his bedside table a copied-out quotation from Rabbi Harold Kushner on the meaning of life, death, suffering ...

This table at lunchtime where eight cadets out of twelve confess, in the heat of a surprisingly free debate, that they weren't in favor of the war in Iraq, because, according to them, the chances of a "police option" weren't fully explored.

This class, finally, which I am allowed to observe, where the questions under consideration—the weighty and highly strategic problems that will be debated for an hour by a dozen future knightlings of the sky, as they all sit calmly behind desks arranged in a semicircle—are these: First, "How many times in the morning do you push the snooze button on your alarm clock? In what circumstances? Why? And how can you get rid of this annoying habit?" and second, "How can you stop this other pathological behavior, much more serious for a future pilot and officer—the smoking habit? Do you think the right method is to use chewing gum? To slip the money you've saved from every unbought pack into a piggy bank and see how much you

end up with after a certain period of time? If you're married, or dating, should you get a gentle massage every time you don't smoke? Or should you be punished if you smoke, and be made to eat your cigarette?"

Why did you enlist? I ask them. Why, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, does one decide to become an Air Force officer?

Some (whose decisions, they tell me, date from the shock of 9/11): *To defend my country.*

Others (who, obviously, are aware of all the major historical debates over whether the United States has the right or not to meddle in the affairs of other nations): *To defend the Constitution.*

Still others (supporters of a neo-conservative foreign policy—which is to say, plainly, a more active, more aggressive foreign policy): *Beyond even our own Constitution, to defend the values of freedom on which it is based, and to defend them everywhere, yes, everywhere, wherever they're scorned.*

And last is Roslyn Schulte, from St. Louis: "Do you really want to know what brought me here? I wanted to fly the most exciting airplanes—the small, fast jets they only fly in the military. I was thinking of flying; I was thinking of fun."

I don't meet a single one, in fact, who mentions the greatness of the military profession as such.

Nor do I meet anyone who really seems to take into account the increased risk of death today, given the Iraq War, inherent in the simple fact of choosing a military career.

The response of Brigadier General Johnny Weida, the commandant of cadets at the academy, is all the more clear-cut: very little military background in his family; not the least hint of fascination with war or the Army; his first motivation was not planes but sports. What? He guffaws. Yes, he did say "sports." It was 1974; he was twenty; he had a friend who told him that the Air Force Academy was a great place to develop one's athletic skills. The vocation, of course, followed; it came to him, as it often does to others, at the controls of his first F16s; but in the beginning that was it. In the beginning it was primarily "Integrity first, service before self, excellence in all we do"—the motto of the Air Force as well as the values of sport.

I repeat that this may be an exceptional case.

And I'll take care not to judge the broader mentality of the U.S. military (or, above all, of those backup troops who dishonored themselves at Abu Ghraib) on the basis of this academy where they train officers who make it a point of honor not to be "mere" soldiers.

But I should confess that I return to my hotel somewhat confused.

And I decide, this very evening, that from now on I will think twice before allowing myself to talk glibly, like too many of my fellow citizens, about the imperial American military—or, beyond the military, about the imperial calling of the country itself.

"Involuntary Romans," Paul Morand said.

"Incompetent imperialism," added the British historian Niall Ferguson, whose thesis is that the United States doesn't have, and never did have, sufficient military will for its ambitions.

"Incoherent empire," Michael Mann, on the other end of the ideological spectrum, asserts, denouncing the "untidy militarism" of a country that never knew, and knows increasingly less, how to control the territories it has conquered.

And once again, Tocqueville long ago lent us a key to the riddle when he wrote that Americans have even less inclination for war than for politics.

A GILDED APARTHEID FOR THE OLD?

In Sun City, Arizona, the rule is simple. Implacable. No home without at least one resident above fifty-five. Children and teenagers admitted only to visit. A city of the old. A private city, reserved for retired people, cut off from the rest of the world. In this falsely urban space with perfectly straight, almost deserted streets, where once in a while a few granddads in golf carts pass by, an optimist will see an oasis of prosperity in a society plagued by crisis, a bourgeois utopia dreamed up by some grand developer. In this he'll recognize a strange variation, but a variation all the same, on the good old "pastoralism"—inherited from eighteenth-century English landscape architecture—that played such a large role in the formation of American ideology. He'll perceive in it a reunion—not at all dishonorable in itself—of the spirit of Virgil and that of the Enlightenment. A reunion of back-to-nature dreams, dating from the first American colonists, with the residential progressivism that I discovered in Lakewood, near Los Angeles, which had already shown me what sort of landscape such a mixture can give rise to, and what kind of egalitarian pioneer philosophy it stems from. Emerson's self-reliance on a backdrop of ghettoized old age. Thoreau's Walden in an imaginary version of a fortress under siege. In planned cities of this kind, in citadels emerging in the middle of nowhere (in this case in the desert), perhaps our optimist will even discern a final manifestation, in this twenty-first century, of that pioneering spirit, that capacity to shape oneself "by solemn and mutual consent" into a "body politic," that Tocqueville writes of in the opening pages of *Democracy in America* (where, quoting Nathaniel Morton, he discusses the creation of Plymouth and the first New England colonies, and describes them as the very essence of the democratic aim).

And I confess, as an aside, that I didn't find the little dance organized by a few of these senior-citizen settlers at the Westerners Square Dance Club, in Sun City West, completely ridiculous. I confess to finding a certain charm in the spectacle of fifteen or twenty old ladies, dressed like Scarlett O'Hara in ruffled skirts and other alluring apparel, dancing to the point of breathlessness, whirling

with Rhett Butlers the youngest of whom is eighty years old. The problem, obviously, is the rest. Everything else. The problem is all the black people you can't see here, and the Hispanics who, I am told, are here, but whose presence I am not aware of either. Poor people in general, a huge population left out of this suburban dream. The problem, in fact, is the feeling of having reached, with this tribe of the old, the very last stage of a process of social segregation a few premises of which I was able to observe in Los Angeles, and which, when all is said and done, manages neither to keep the poor in their ghettos nor to banish them to the city's outskirts. The problem, in short, is that all this implies a profound break with the very tradition of civic-mindedness and civility—I won't even say of compassion—that was responsible, and continues to be responsible, for this country's greatness. And this experiment in privatizing a public space at the expense of a community cannot fail to create a terrible precedent. Sun City seems like a little satellite freed from the laws of social and national gravity, from the "nation state," the "station," scorned by Emerson. And if we accept this, I say to one of my Scarletts, if we ratify the principle of this gilded ghetto, based on membership in a certain age and income bracket, then by what right can we tomorrow prevent the development of cities *forbidden* to the old? Or to gay men and women? Or to Jews? In whose name can we resist the definitive Balkanization of

The problem of Sun City, this tribe of the very old, is that it implies a profound break with the very tradition of civic-mindedness that was responsible for America's greatness. Sun City seems like a little satellite freed from the laws of social and national gravity.

American space that could well result? But that's completely different, my indignant square dancer exclaims. You can't compare such horrific plans to an organization whose sole aim is to make life easier for old people who were suffocating in the big cities.

Maybe, I am in fact well aware of the little arrangements for everyday life in such old-age communities: electrical sockets that are higher up, so you don't have to bend down too far; carefully calibrated lighting, so as not to tire your eyes; golf courses; swimming pools heated both summer and winter; the alarm systems, connecting houses to hospitals, that save precious minutes in case of sickness, since delay is often fatal at this age; and so on. All that, obviously, is not trivial. But at the same time ... this impression of dismal coldness ... these artificial fires in the fireplaces, and these fake-looking lawns ... this plastic-coated life ... these

dying people exuding health. This dead-end time, bereft of noteworthy events except dances and volunteer police rounds and, last but not least, the source of inexhaustible excitement: deaths and burials ... I leave Sun City with a feeling of unease, no longer knowing if you come here to save or to damn yourself, to banish death or savor a foretaste of it. Back in Phoenix, I learn that Del Webb, the inventor of this frozen miracle, this paradise laden with all the attractions of purgatory, this kindergarten for senior citizens where life seems to have morphed into a pathology, learned his profession by building casinos, military installations, and internment camps for the Japanese.

A FRENCHMAN IN THE KERRY CAMP

I am having a fine time on a two-day trip with the press corps accompanying John Kerry, the Democratic presidential candidate, but it almost ends badly.

The first night, for the Tempe-Las Vegas leg, right after Kerry's third debate with President Bush, they start by putting me in the second plane, the wrong one, the one without the candidate, the one carrying the luggage, the sound system, the staff.

Then, the next day, for the second leg—the one that, after a night in Vegas and a speech early the next morning to 10,000 AARP members, will take us to Des Moines, Iowa, for a big outdoor rally—I am invited to plane No. 1.

But despite my entreaties, I still am not allowed to come near the candidate.

There are about fifteen of us from the press, actually. Twenty or so Secret Service agents; an equal number of PR assistants flitting from the main cabin to the front cabin, which has been fitted out for Kerry. The other reporters all get a one-on-one at some time or another. Depending on his degree

of importance and that of his newspaper, each is entitled to have a press attaché either discreetly signal that his turn has come, or search him out in his seat to lead him by the hand into the holy of holies. But not I. Never. I am the only one, oddly, who upon asking whether the candidate is available yet is systematically answered with a vague and annoyed "In a little while." And each time I present myself, I get embarrassed but still negative replies. After a while they don't even bother to invent plausible excuses, and the automatic answer becomes "The candidate is sleeping ... The candidate is still sleeping ... It's still not the right time yet, because the candidate is tired and he's sleeping ..."

"Don't you think that's a bit strange?" my seat neighbor, a journalist for a television network, who has been observing this treatment from the beginning without comment, asks me.

WHAT GIVES? ROBOTS CAN DRIVE AROUND MARS BUT NOT ON EARTH?



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Helen Greiner's eleven-year-old crush was on a movie droid. She became the robot girl, ultimately starting her own robot company, iRobot, right out of MIT. Today, her robots swim like fish. Walk like crabs. Inspect caves in Afghanistan. Clear minefields. Climb walls. Roomba,® iRobot's vacuum cleaner, has even appeared on a sitcom.

At the top of iRobot's corporate mission statement: Build cool stuff. Robotic "stuff" has already leapt from the lab to the road in the Lincoln Navigator. Press its buttons and the Navigator comes alive. The liftgate opens and closes by remote. The third-row seats fold flat. Its side mirrors wiggle in and out. Running boards automatically extend and retract. The rear bumper sensors activate sonar to sense objects behind you. Its Navigation System maps GPS data and responds to 174 voice commands, speaking out directions turn-by-turn.*

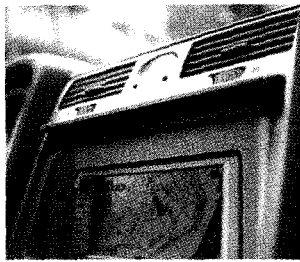
Will robots someday move right into the driver's seat? Futurists say yes. But Ms. Greiner says, not so fast. "Myself, I love driving, so why would I want a robot driving my SUV for me? Unless, of course, it makes driving even more fun. Maybe someday we'll all be driving by thinking and pointing our eyes to steer.

"Also in the future," she surmises, "ultra-wideband communications could allow your car to talk to other cars. Negotiate with them, even. 'Who takes the turn first? I'm cutting you off. No, you're not!' This could promote greater traffic efficiency." Letting cars handle road rage? Sounds like progress. But for now, civility can be savored in the luxurious cabin of the Navigator.

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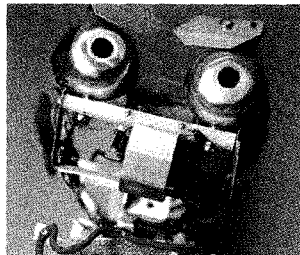


AA
Onboard the Navigator we find GPS Navigation, Parking sensors, Power just-about-everything. Have robots invaded your luxury vehicle?

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Press a button and the Navigator's power liftgate opens and closes without human assistance.

>
Helen Greiner
Chairman and co-founder,
iRobot Corporation.

Helen's views on robots driving on Mars but not Earth?
"On Mars, there are no Boston drivers. So maybe it's an easier environment that way."



LINCOLN

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"Yes, I do. And I must say, I'm beginning to wonder ..."

"And do you want an explanation—the real one, the one none of these bozos would ever dare tell you right out?"

"Yes, of course I do!"

Well, it's quite simple, he went on. It's like the story of the Hermès ties Kerry replaced with Vineyard Vines ties, made in the USA, out of fear that Bush's handlers would leap at the chance to support their "Kerry-as-agent-of-the-French" business. Or it's like the affair of the Evian bottle he had taken away in a hurry the other day from the Santa Monica hotel room where he was being interviewed by Matt Bai, of *The New York Times Magazine*. You're French. You're as French as a bottle of Evian or an Hermès tie. And their real fear, the real reason you're the only one of us not to have any contact with Kerry, is that a Frenchman might suddenly claim eight days before the election that the candidate picked him to confide his secrets to ...

I am astonished, of course. Not just astonished—I feel slightly aggravated at the idea of this ludicrous misconception. And since, in any case, I've had enough by now, and thus have nothing to lose, I charge one last time toward the watchdog standing guard by the bar in the middle of the plane, and I say, "Listen, I get the picture. Let's make a deal: if I get to see the candidate and if he talks to me, I agree not to publish anything before the election or even till the summer of 2005, when one of my articles will appear.

BIRTHDAY

When I was a boy, we called it punishment
to be locked up in a room. God's apparent
abdication from the affairs of the world
seemed unforgivable. This morning,
climbing five stories to my apartment,
I remember my father's angry voice
mixed up with anxiety & love. As always,
the possibility of home—at best an ideal—
remains illusory, so I read Plato, for whom love
has not been punctured. I sprawl on the carpet,
like a worm composting, understanding things
about which I have no empirical knowledge.
Though the door is locked, I am free.
Like an outdated map, my borders are changing.

—HENRI COLE

Henri Cole's latest book of poems is Middle Earth (2003), which received the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award.

But I also swear that if you keep up your idiotic arrangement, and if your anti-French fixation keeps me from seeing him at all, then when the time comes you'll get a portrayal revealing that the ex-candidate, who could by then be the forty-fourth president of the United States, is a guy who spends most of his time ... sleeping!"

Amused smile of the aide. Laughter, in front of us, from the group of young women around their friend Alexandra Kerry, the candidate's daughter, who have been following the scene.

So finally, just before our descent to Des Moines, I'm granted the little one-on-one. My impressions? A nice man, in shirtsleeves, joking with his staff, of a piece with the man I have seen looking for volunteers to toss a football around with him on the tarmac so he can stretch his legs. A European at heart. He is interested to hear that this whole story of Francophobia is just bullshit made up by the Washington press corps, and that in all the months I've been traveling through the heartland of America, I've never met any ordinary citizens who are angry with me for being French. A good candidate. A courageous activist, fully involved in the battle that's under way, absorbed in his role and his mission, inspired, passionate. A rationalist above all. A real rationalist, a man of the Enlightenment and of his word. Not doubting for a single instant that truth—even if it takes a while to come to light; even if the professional masters of deceit and disinformation appear to be gaining the upper hand—will always win out. That's why he took so long to react to the scurrilous campaign of the Swift Boat Veterans, which cast aspersions on his past as a Vietnam hero. That's also why he himself is always ill at ease with that terse style of argument, and why he prefers long, drawn-out explanations that are reasonable, articulate, sensible. Is he naive? Optimistic? Does he fatally underestimate the irrational factors that can decide an election? Just a few more days, and we'll find out.

TOCQUEVILLE IN TEXAS

"I'm looking for Paul Burka. Professor Paul Burka. He's teaching a class on Tocqueville that must have begun about twenty minutes ago, and I can't seem to find his classroom ..." The man I'm talking to is a giant with a gray moustache, wearing jeans, his T-shirt damp with perspiration, taking the fresh air with a dozen or so young people sitting, like him, on wicker chairs in a sunny, comfortable lobby at the immense University of Texas at Austin. It is two days after the presidential election, which George Bush has decisively won. "Paul Burka?" he replies, rising a little in a sign of welcome. "That's me. I'm the one you're looking for. I'm Professor Paul Burka!" Then, gesturing at the group of young people sitting around him, similarly relaxed, carefree, without notes or notebooks, just a book of some kind on some of their knees: "And here's my class. Yes, that's right, we're in class now. We've been talking about the first lines of Chapter Eight of the first part of Volume One, on the

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federal Constitution, as we were waiting for you. But now it's your turn, since you're here. You know as much about it as I do—I'll give you the floor."

What? This is a class? This is a professor—this amiable colossus, without rostrum or lectern, who looks like he's having a drink with a few former students, and who explains briefly that he used to be a lawyer and is now the executive editor of *Texas Monthly*? Yes, a class. It's rather bewildering for someone who's accustomed to the rigidities and ceremonies of the French classroom, but it really is a class. And if I'm to believe *Burka*, it seems I've happened upon a freshman honors class—in other words, unusually bright students who began the year with Thucydides, continued it with Ibsen, went on to Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, and are now immersed in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. "What do you know about this book?" I ask them, having pulled my chair into a narrow band of shadow against a wall between two bay windows. "I'll tell you what I think about it. But you go first. What does it mean to you? What does it tell you about your country, your time?" The "tyranny of the majority," one student tells me, tracking an enormous butterfly. "The idea that tyranny exists when one single party holds all power in its hands." The place of religion, a second student continues, arms bare in the afternoon sun—"the necessity, for democracy to function, of keeping church separate from state: is that actually the case everywhere these days?" And a third student, shirt open to his navel, ebullient, cheerful: "But look—Tocqueville isn't Montesquieu—the principle of separation isn't exactly a Tocquevillean principle!" And another, talking offhandedly, through his teeth: "Look at the country's Founding Fathers—weren't they super-religious? Wasn't religion the very foundation, according to them, of a politics that was faithful to morality?" And yet another: "Kerry lost because of abortion; you can't say at the same time that you are conscientiously opposed to abortion and that you want a law authorizing it." And finally a pretty redhead, with long tousled hair, sunburned nose, and the bashful look the sun's glare gives her: "On the contrary—that was his honor. To believe one thing but refuse to impose it on other people; to have your convictions but leave other people free to act the way they want—isn't that a good policy? Isn't that the definition of democracy, in Tocqueville's sense?"

For of course we have begun to talk about current events—which is to say about the re-election of the president. Then, when I ask the question straight out, I am surprised to find that a majority of the small group is in favor of gay marriage, and that the same majority thinks Bush overdid it in flaunting his religious values, and that, indeed, a majority opposed the president's re-election. In short, in this class in Austin, the capital of Texas, a state that is supposed to be a conservative stronghold, the trend seems to be in the other direction. Since yesterday everyone has been harping on the same story of "triumphant moral values." Everyone, myself included, has described this society's

profound evolution in the direction of the extreme right, definitively turning its back on its European heritage. Some intellectuals brood about the so-called "tidal wave" that's risen from the Deep South to inundate America, even the coasts. (The critic Jason Epstein lamented this when I saw him not long ago in New York.) But what if that were not the case? What if the fundamental movement, the one that these young people embody even if they don't yet express it, were going in the direction of freedom of behavior, of conduct, of mind? What if in the living forces of this country there were an untamable wish to preserve the great achievements of the democratic revolution of the 1960s and 1970s? What if the election two days ago—far from being the expression of a sinister trend or a reversal, far from heralding the future face of an America that denies the heritage, say, of Kennedy and Roosevelt, and gives shape once again to the ghosts of McCarthyism—were, on the contrary, a last stand? What if it were the last fight of a majority that—furious but desperate, determined but without illusions—knows it won't always be the majority, knows that America has already changed so much that it will be less and less easy to advertise hatred of blacks, Jews, Indians, or women? Here in Austin, on the edge of the South I'm about to dive into, I ask the question.

ARMED LIKE NAZIS

You won't understand anything about this country if you choose to overlook the question of weapons," the vivacious Carole Keeton Strayhorn, the Texas comptroller of public accounts, had told me in her Austin office. Here carrying a weapon is a right, people explained to me, a right inspired by the English Bill of Rights of 1689, which was explicitly linked with the right to resist tyranny. And what you Europeans don't want to see is that it is guaranteed as such by the Second Amendment of the Constitution. Are you going to Dallas after you leave here? Yes? In that case you should keep on going to Fort Worth, where there's a major gun fair. You'll see what the mood's like. You'll see all the people there. And you'll understand that it's the heart of Texas, and of America, that's beating in that kind of place.

No sooner said than done. Just after reaching Dallas, I take Route 30, the Tom Landry Highway, named after the former coach of the Dallas Cowboys football team. And here I am, in the midst of a most puzzling city, all parks, deserted hotels, highway overpasses with very few cars—here I am at the center of this empty city where neither the admirable Kimball Art Museum, by Louis Kahn, nor the famous Hotel Texas, where John and Jackie Kennedy spent their last night together, seems to attract anyone, and where everything looks as if it's actually been constructed around a Mussolini-style building with a white façade, where a sign reads GREAT WESTERN GUN SHOW.

In the lobby I see a fat couple, both carrying new rifles.

I see a gray-haired fellow with pinched features carrying an oversized package in the shape of a weapon. I give my identity card to a group of policemen who make sure—absurd, but true—that I’m unarmed. I pass a table covered with worn-out felt where the National Rifle Association is recruiting new members. And I enter the showroom.

Hundreds of stands. Thousands of buyers and window-shoppers wandering with concentrated gazes from stand to stand. Groups of people. Families. Overexcited mothers pushing strollers. Old men, young men, eyes shining. Tattooed people and middle-class people. People dressed as Confederate soldiers, looking for guns from the Civil War period. A stand displaying rifles from the Korean War. Another one where people come to caress daggers whose certificates of origin bluntly specify how many “Viets” they’ve stabbed. Competition Bushmaster AR-15s like the one used by the snipers who killed thirteen people near Washington, D.C., in 2002. A guy who says his name is Yoda, like the *Star Wars* character, who’s selling a “sport

One of thirty-one armbands—“Limited series! Numbered!”—that belonged to his first bodyguards. And, exhibited like the most precious art book, a catalogue containing photographs of the rarest pieces of the seller’s collection: life-size wax statues of Nazi officers; helmets in a library; a silver bowl, gift from Hitler to Eva Braun; dishes, engraved with a skull, from which the couple is supposed to have eaten; and the star attraction—an immense painting, almost a mural, showing Hitler in uniform, a coat draped over his shoulders, fist on his hip, quite feminine. Doesn’t it bother you to sell this stuff? “Since there are people who want to buy it, someone’s got to sell it.” Are you aware that this is absolutely forbidden in Europe? “Makes sense. You were occupied; we conquered them!” No misgivings, then? “No misgivings; the Reich killed fewer people than Genghis Khan.” Would you sell objects that had belonged to bin Laden? “Oh, no! [outraged] That’s completely different! Those things sure wouldn’t have the aesthetic quality of these Nazi artifacts.”



In the lobby I see a fat couple, both carrying new rifles. I see a gray-haired fellow carrying an oversized package. I am about to enter the Great Western Gun Show. Before I do, I give my identity card to a group of policemen who make sure—absurd, but true—that I’m unarmed.

version” of the Barrett 82 A-1 .50-caliber rifle. The price? Eight thousand dollars. The procedure? Hold an American passport and carry a valid driver’s license. That’s it? That’s it. No need for any authorization from the FBI? Yeah—a phone call. The agent at the other end takes note; he doesn’t take down the serial number, he just takes note. Still, don’t you sometimes have to turn someone down? Sometimes, yes. Suppose someone comes to you saying “I’ve just been robbed. I want a weapon to get revenge.” In that case I’d hesitate; you don’t sell to a guy who’s out of control. What about me, for instance? If I weren’t French, would you sell me one of your marvels? He hesitates, looks me up and down. Not sure. I don’t sell to just anyone, and you don’t know anything about this stuff, it’s pretty obvious ...

And then, next to Yoda’s stand, another one I linger at. The seller is about sixty, brick-red complexion, white hairpiece. A sign says COLLECTOR PAYING TOP PRICES. And I notice that the objects of his “collection” are “German war relics”—in other words, Nazi weapons and souvenirs. A jumble of pilots’ badges. Goebbels dolls. Swastikas. Lugers priced at \$18,000. Himmler’s personal revolver. Göring’s sword. A piece of the door to Nazi headquarters in Munich. A fragment of what is said to be the Führer’s actual helmet.

As I burrow deeper into the show, I’ll get to see a half dozen other antique dealers—good Americans who happen to have a bent for the Nazi aesthetic. Here’s another display, advertising some of the most prejudicial, controversial films ever made: cassettes of Leni Riefenstahl, Nazi marches and songs, and a film titled *The Glory Years: Ruins of the Reich, Vol. III*. Seeing what is for sale, I cannot help asking if the emotional power of the defense of gun ownership is fully explained by the fact that it is a constitutional right. Maybe something else is also at work, something uglier. I take to the road again, headed for Louisiana, more skeptical than ever—part of me wondering if the real story isn’t here, in this terrible, grotesque fascination. Of course there are all the fine speeches about the right to bear arms. The grand-standing. The campaign arguments. The pompous professions of faith of the NRA and its CEO, Wayne LaPierre, whom I saw the other week in Virginia. But in the end, the unformulated thought of all these gun-toting adherents, the possible horizon to their logorrhea, perhaps its ultimate truth, the secret which, although usually unconscious, seems mutely active in some people’s minds, could lie in something else, something evoked by the Hitlerian kitsch, the morbid flirtation with horror.

MARC ROMANELLI/GETTY IMAGES

THE SIXTH FLOOR

In Dallas now; the real Kennedy mystery is here.

It's not about knowing whether Oswald acted alone. It's not about the endless discussions of whether there were three bullets or more, if the shots came from behind or in front. It's not about the interlacing theories that blame the loading of the most famous 6.5mm Mannlicher-Carcano rifle in history on Castroites or anti-Castroites, on the Mafia or the CIA, on the Russians, on Johnson, on the far left, on the far right, on the military-industrial complex and the casino lobbies, on China or Israel, on the Jews or the Protestants, on rich Texans, on the FBI, on the Vietnamese, on J. Edgar Hoover, on Howard Hughes.

It's not even about the pathetic and tireless "JFK assassination researchers" I see this morning opposite the Texas School Book Depository, in Dealey Plaza, on the very site of the crime, haranguing their meager public, desperate to sell paraphernalia. One has his "Real JFK Facts," proving the existence of the second shooter, another his "Never Seen World Exclusive Interview" demonstrating that the

In the great, simple sentiments that the Kennedy saga mobilizes; in this nexus of power and misfortune, fall and redemption; in this story of youth struck down, it is the eternal form of Tragedy—"terror and pity," Aristotle said—that is played out and makes us tremble.

president's wounds were faked at the autopsy. A third offers a new "Eyewitness Video," whose dramatized freeze-frames, paranoid zoom-ins, blurred faces circled in red, are supposed to shatter the Warren Commission's conclusions. The last has "the missing thirteen seconds" that Abraham Zapruder didn't film, which establish without the least possible doubt that his film was doctored.

No. The mystery, if there is one, is lodged here, on the sixth floor of the book depository, in this emotion that overwhelms me (and I see it overwhelming nearly everyone around me too) as I face these black-and-white images, these films and stills that all of us know by heart.

It is, more precisely, contained in this rare—perhaps unique—emotional reaction, whose equivalent I have experienced in no other situation or museum or memorial in the world. I can only describe the paradox this way:

1. These images are clichés. We've seen them over and over. Nowhere in all these photos of Kennedy's life, or in the short films that run in an endless loop, showing for the nth time either the assassination or the funeral—nowhere does there appear anything even the slightest bit unusual or even mildly unfamiliar. It's not the comic but the tragic

aspect of repetition, and the Americans who are here, all the devotees of the myth who came, as I did, into the small projection room to see again, indefinitely repeated, the scene of the last turn, or the one of the motorcade leaving, sirens wailing, for Trauma Room No. 1 at Parkland Hospital, know these sequences by heart.

2. The Kennedy myth itself. For a long time now the Kennedy myth has ceased to be a myth. Or, to put it another way, few myths have for forty years been the subject of a demystifying rage so radical, so unbridled, and in the end—scandal after scandal, best seller after best seller—so overwhelmingly effective. I question the people around me. I talk to these fetishists of memory and legend who have come from all over the United States. All of them, or almost all, know that the spectacle of family happiness with Jackie was a made-up publicity representation. All of them, or almost all, know that the tanned young hero, exuding optimism and health, was a sick man, drugged with testosterone and cortisone, whose air of vitality was an illusion. All of them have at least heard talk of the "sins

of the father"—Joseph P. Kennedy's anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi leanings, the suspicious origins of the family fortune, even the shabby tricks that got JFK into the White House. No one can manage to ignore completely that this "great president," this "visionary," this official incarnation of an America that wins and dictates what's right and wrong, had the time in a thousand days

to send the first military advisers to Vietnam, to launch the disastrous invasion of the Bay of Pigs, and, one year before the beautiful "*Ich bin ein Berliner*" speech, to let the shameful Berlin Wall be raised.

3. Despite all that, despite the stock of information available to anyone who wants it, despite the concealed face that is no longer concealed from most people, despite the methodical disenchantment to which the Kennedy myth has been subjected, one image of this man in his glory is enough. One of his photos as a young, beaming Prince Charming, American tabloid, from Washington to the moon, opulence, happiness, New Frontier, insouciance. One image of Jackie, in an Oleg Cassini gown during their great mediatized lie, is enough. Another one, on the day of the tragedy: pink suit stained with blood, legs splayed, on all fours, all care for image forgotten, leaning over the rear seat of the Lincoln, gathering together the pieces of her husband's brain. Yet another one: Jackie again, in the same bloody suit she didn't want to change out of, next to Lyndon Johnson as he takes the oath of office. Or another: black crepe veil over her face, next to Bobby in tails, or with her two children, climbing the steps of the Capitol

on their too-short legs for a final farewell to their father. That's all that's needed, just one of those vignettes, and you are overcome with a malaise that I'm not sure has an equivalent—not even in the images of September 11.

What kind of cliché makes you cry?

What is a myth you no longer believe in but that still functions?

There it is. It's the question asked by lovers of antiquity when they wonder if the Greeks believed in their myths or not—to which they reply, as André Gide did, that it was a matter less of belief than of assent.

And the fact is that in the great, simple sentiments that the Kennedy saga mobilizes; in this live death we are given to witness over and over again without ever tiring of it; in this proximity of suffering and love; in this nexus of power and misfortune, fall and redemption; in this story of youth struck down; in this true story of a glamorous and cursed family, blessed by the gods and pursued by a fate perceived as both inconceivable and necessary, it is the eternal form of Tragedy—"terror and pity," Aristotle said—that is played out and that makes us tremble.

The Kennedys are not, as is often alleged, an American royal family. They are the brothers in fate of Oedipus, Achilles, Theseus, Narcissus, Prometheus. They are the tragic side of a nation that thought it could do without tragedy. They are America's Greeks.

HELL MUST FEEL LIKE THIS

At first sight it's a prison. It's even, apparently, a decent-looking prison. A wholesome life in the great outdoors, on this former plantation north of Baton Rouge, the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, where you arrive via a sad and splendid road, planted with trees covered in kudzu and Spanish moss.

The bend in the Mississippi: the assistant warden, Cathy Fontenot, young, blonde, hair pulled back, pregnant, explains that the bend serves as a natural barrier on three sides, and renders unnecessary the cumbersome apparatus of watchtowers, barbed wire, walls.

The "trusties"—in other words, the 800 of 5,000 prisoners who have earned certain privileges through good behavior—can walk without surveillance, almost free, on these 18,000 acres of greenery that they call in these parts The Farm.

Carey Lassaigue, for instance, the trusty in charge of the stables, who, with his well-polished boots, his immaculate white T-shirt, his handsome, honest blue eyes, his faithful dogs, looks more like a gentleman farmer than someone doing life.

The cell blocks of "D Camp"—one of six living areas—themselves look all right. They have birds' names: Raven, Hawk 1 and 2, Falcon 1, 2, and 3. The dormitories, showers, collective baths, are in an altogether different league from what I was allowed to see at Rikers Island or in Las Vegas (not to mention that veritable pigsty Tocqueville

discovered when he visited New Orleans, where the prisoners, he wrote, lived chained up like animals in the midst of their excrement).

And then there's the rodeo season, which every year in October attracts thousands of tourists from all over Louisiana. The prisoners are so proud of the rodeo they put on that none of them has ever taken advantage of the occasion, or of the relaxing of discipline it inevitably entails, to attempt an escape and, by doing so, risk having the administration retaliate by suppressing this "social benefit."

There's the volleyball court on the impeccable lawn at Falcon 3.

The boxing matches with referees, gloves, all the rules of fair play, as in any Southern university a century ago.

Wood figurines at the entrance to the housing blocks, made by the prisoners themselves for Thanksgiving, represent a fairy, a dwarf, a piglet on a leash.

In short, an above-average prison. A prison that from the outside looks almost like a model prison.

Except for one detail. One small detail, which has less to do with the prison itself than with the ruling legislation in the state, but which causes this landscape of green pastures to topple over into nightmare.

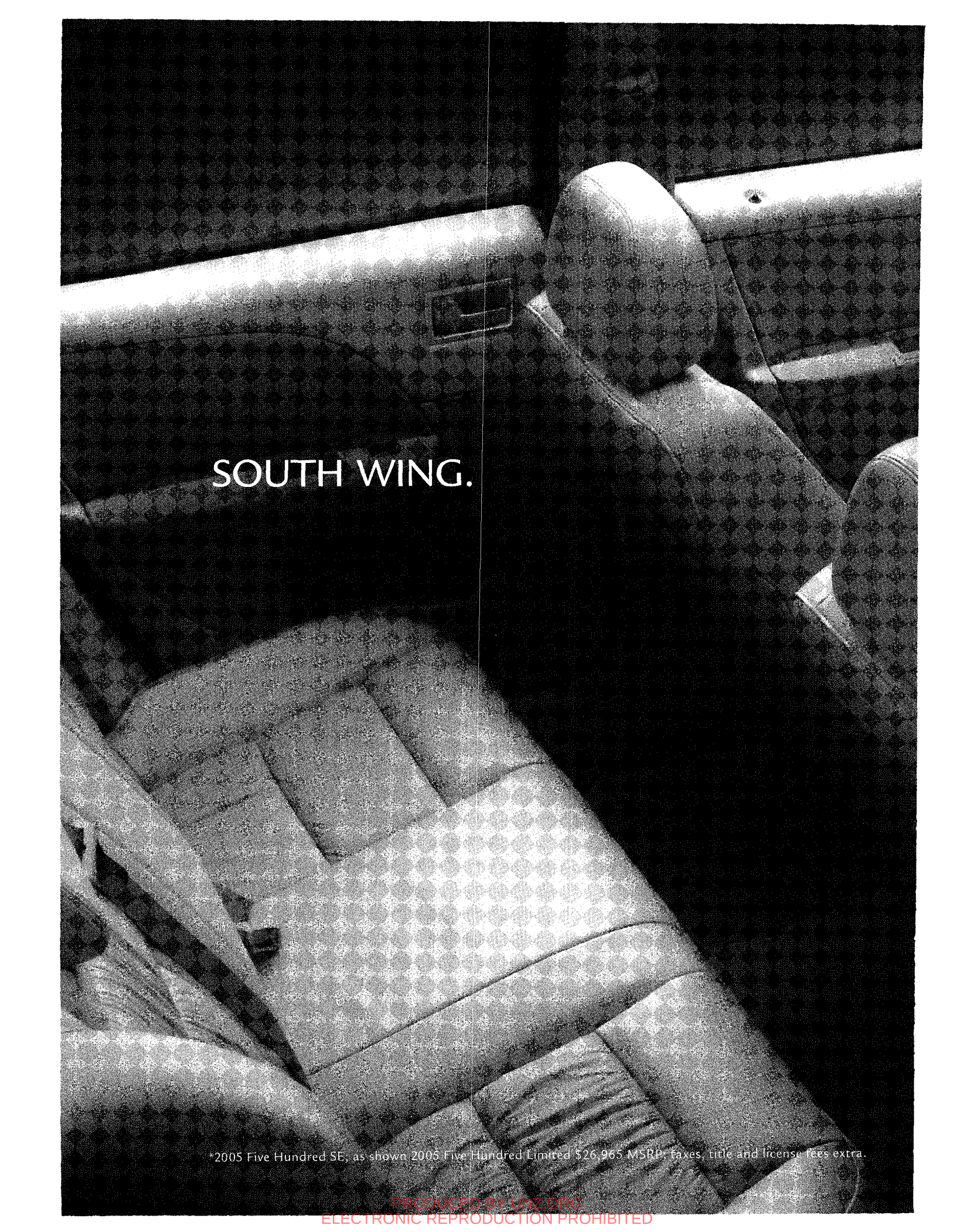
Since Angola is a prison reserved, for the most part, for people condemned to death or to life in prison, and since Louisiana law has the distinctive feature of suppressing the very principle of parole (conditional release for good behavior), the men who enter here know that they'll never get out, and that they're condemned to live without even the vague prospect of release that is the prisoner's final hope in other prisons.

How can you live when there's no hope for anything? How do you prepare yourself for prison when you know that whatever you do, you'll get out only by dying?

You think about your death, Cathy Fontenot replies, unflinchingly. Here at Angola, she explains, we have a magnificent hearse, drawn by a horse and made by the prisoners themselves. We have a special trusty, a carpenter. He builds the coffins with his own hands. Others dig the graves and prepare the wakes. When you don't have a family anymore, or when your family has forgotten you, you go to our cemetery to choose where your grave will be. You learn to read, too; most of these people are illiterate, and they learn how to read so they'll be able to comfort themselves with the Bible or the Koran when their time comes to be led to the death chamber.

I make my way to the cemetery where, in fact, those prisoners for whom Angola was the entire universe are buried.

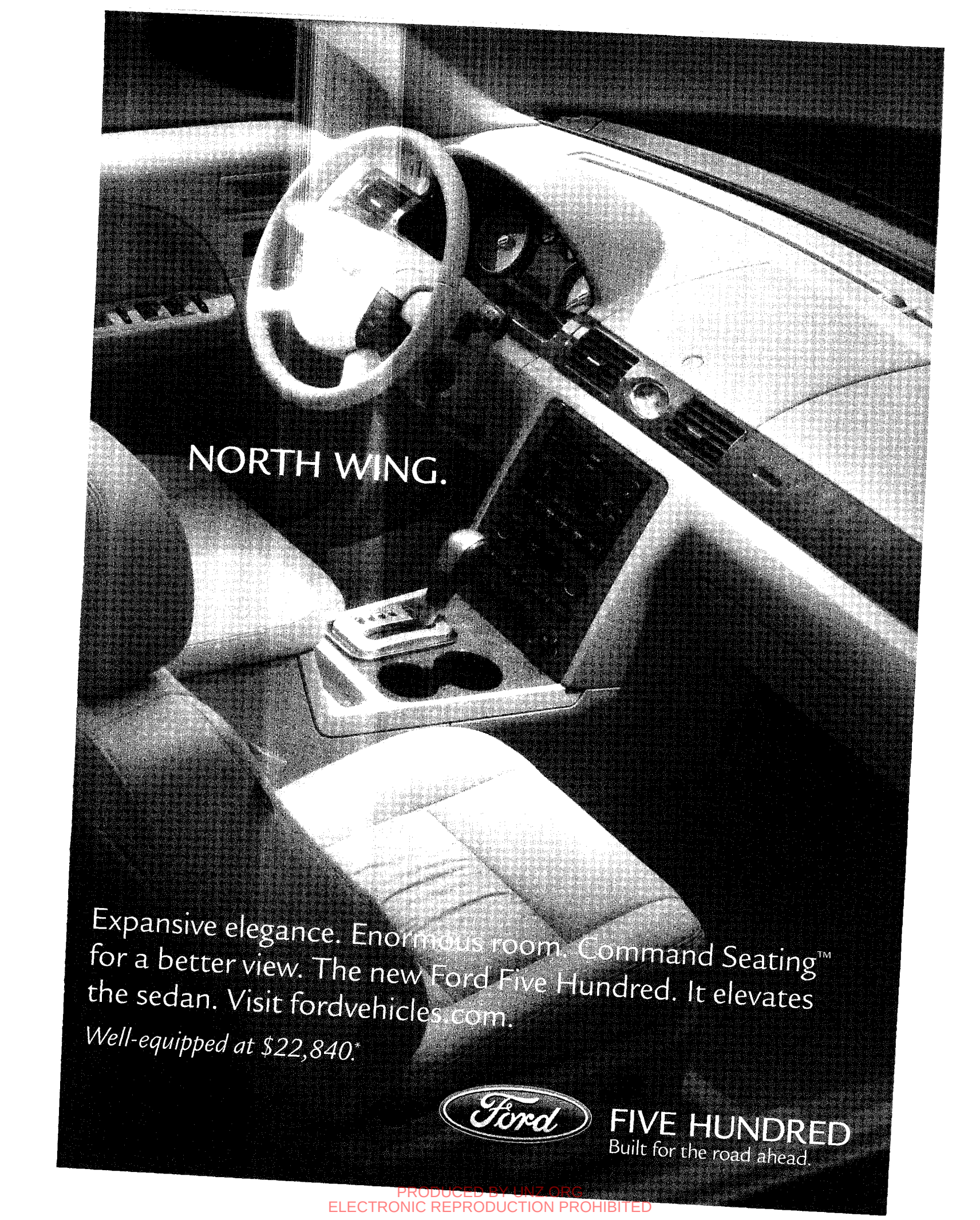
I visit the death chamber, along with the little adjoining room where a victim's representatives can watch the condemned man's execution by lethal injection from behind glass, and a visiting area whose amenities Cathy Fontenot is proud to explain to me: separate men's and women's toilets; an "evacuation plan" in case of fire; and an immense, hope-

A black and white photograph of a car's interior. The focus is on the passenger seat and the adjacent door panel. The seat is upholstered in leather with a quilted pattern. The door panel features a checkered or diamond-shaped pattern. The text "SOUTH WING." is printed in white, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image.

SOUTH WING.

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FIVE HUNDRED
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inspiring mural showing a man rising into the sky on a winged white horse. In another room are three tables—yes, three; they don't skimp on expenses at Angola—where the condemned man can have his last meal served to him: good meat, foie gras, excellent side dishes, and even, once, a deliciously cooked dish of crayfish, paid for out of the warden's own pocket and prepared by the prison's culinary staff.

Just outside the prison gates is a museum and gift shop where visitors, perhaps some of whom have observed an execution in the death chamber, can buy T-shirts printed with ANGOLA: A GATED COMMUNITY and other souvenirs.

I visit, finally, the strangest part of this decidedly unreal place: the chapel where thirty or so prisoners, sitting on wooden pews, listen to three of their own sing gospel songs to the accompaniment of a Yamaha organ. What hope is there? "Our hope is in here," one of the three ministers, Aubrey Fradieu, a convicted rapist sentenced to life in prison, tells me, striking his heart. "It's been here, inside me, ever since I decided to give my life to the Lord. There's a seminary in Angola; there are hundreds of ministers who have been trained by this prison seminary. That's where the meaning of our life is. It's to reach out to all the prisons of America,

Among the thousands of black women at the service there are the meditative ones and ecstatic ones: some humming quietly, and some singing at the top of their lungs. But the dominating trait, the trait that surprises and moves you, is the joy, the spirit of communion.

spreading the good word that was taught to us here."

The worst thing is that Cathy Fontenot, in a sense, might not be altogether wrong. These men could have become enraged or desperate. They could have fomented revolts next to which the riots of the sixties would look like pale rehearsals. But that's not the case.

It's really a form of life that's been organized here—a diminished life, a bloodless life, but a life all the same.

What may one think about this ersatz life? Is it really the worst, or only a lesser evil? Should we rejoice in the thought that life is stronger than death? Or should we see Angola as a laboratory of the inhuman, where an anti-life is being invented, established under the rule of death and possibly worse than death?

In case I had any doubts, Cathy Fontenot, as she walks me back to the car, removes them. "Hope," she says to me, suddenly thoughtful. "Hope is such a relative feeling, you know ... Take, for instance, the old story of one condemned man they unstrapped at the last second because the red telephone, the governor's, rang. True, they re-attached

him right away. True, after the governor said something to him—no one knew what—the governor asked to speak to the executioner, and had him strapped down again and executed. But what is hope, if it isn't that? Isn't that proof that hope is still alive in Angola?"

GOSPEL AND COMPANY

They are everywhere.

For the forty-eight hours I've been in Memphis, Tennessee, following in the footsteps of my youth and of rock-and-roll reminiscence—for the forty-eight hours I've been going from the ultra-kitsch house of Elvis to the bars on Beale Street where they're still singing his songs; from B.B. King's club to Sun Studio, on Union Avenue; and from the Rum Boogie Café to the Music Hall of Fame, where I wanted to see Booker T. Jones's organ—I haven't been able to take a step without bumping into them.

The men are in tails, shirts with starched collars, soft hats or top hats, patent-leather shoes, gloves, carrying canes—black men of all ages, sometimes very old, sometimes fat, sweating under fur coats too hot for the season, puffing, all dressed up as if they were dandies from the Roaring Twenties.

The women, also black and of all ages, all shapes and sizes, some very beautiful, others enormous, in evening dresses, moiré taffeta cloaks, brocades, pearls and earrings, an entire jewelry shop around their necks and on their wrists, iridescent or embroidered silk blouses, gloves reaching beyond the elbows, high heels, hats like hanging gardens, tiaras, veils and fans, gauze and organdy

parasols, mink coats reaching to their feet.

In the beginning, I thought they were actors for some grand reconstitution of Tennessee's good old days.

Then, since they were arriving from all over and coalescing in the lobby of my hotel, since they were beginning to be too numerous even to count—hundreds, no, thousands, maybe tens of thousands; it seemed like a joke, or a hallucination, a dream—I told myself that the entire city must have gotten dressed up, and that it was a carnival, as in Venice or Rio.

Is there a carnival in Memphis? I finally end up asking one of these ladies, long, shimmering, bronze-colored outfit, pearl belt and golden diadem, royally awaiting the elevator next to me.

Of course not, she replies. Why a carnival? We're just followers of the Church of God in Christ, and we're having its ninety-seventh annual convention here in Memphis, where it was founded. There are 50,000 of us delegates from all over America, and today is women's day. I'm going. Do you want to come along?

I leap at the chance. I follow her, with some of her

friends, to the minibus that's shuttling back and forth between the hotel and the convention center. On the way, I learn that the most beautiful of the women, the ones most richly adorned, are often the wives of bishops.

"We're elegant for Him," the lady tells me. "Beauties of our Lord. Fiancées of God. For a long time black people went to church in rags. Those days are gone. The day of glory has come. It begins like this, in splendor, in the way we dress ..."

And so I find myself across the city, in the middle of a secure area where the traffic is directed by police officers, in one of those huge auditoriums I got a taste of at Willow Creek, where thousands of delegates are converging, formal, deadly serious, walking as if in a procession, at once rivals and accomplices in their admirable wish to offer the Almighty the spectacle of their gold and finery.

Same blaring public-address system as in the auditorium at Willow Creek. Same giant screens, on both sides of the stage. Same atmosphere of merchandized faith in the wings, with—even more than at Willow Creek—stacks of flyers advertising cosmetics, hat stores, or communion tables; a preacher, Cody Vernon Marshall of Illinois, campaigning for a board position in his church, distributing on glossy paper a profession of faith the main focus of which seems to be, aside from testaments to "fairness" and "proven commitment," printed in gold letters, a photo of him posing handsomely with a stern look, finger placed pensively on his mouth, dressed in the purple robe of the high dignitaries of his church.

The real difference from Willow Creek—the newness, the shock—is the women.

These thousands of women, now seated, each with adornments more ostentatious than the previous, whose eccentricity and extravagance are a fine challenge to American puritanism.

There are some in their Sunday best I recognize from the streets of Memphis, and others, dressed all in white, whom I haven't seen until now.

There are the wives of bishops but also the young, virginal-looking adepts of what is, I am told, the fastest-growing Pentecostal church in the country.

There are the meditative ones and the ecstatic ones: the ones humming quietly, eyes shut, and the ones singing at the top of their lungs.

There are women who, when Mother Willie Mae Rivers, "international supervisor" of the "department of women," intones her gospel, just have tears in their eyes; and women who get up, begin to dance, and shout, pointing up at the sky, eyes rolling upward: "Thank you, Lord, for being there! Thank you, Lord, for your mercy!"

But the dominating trait, the trait that surprises and, after a while, moves you, is this joy, this fervor, this spirit of communion, which I haven't yet seen in any white church.

The part of comedy and faith in this spectacle?

In the heart of one delegate, from Nebraska, what is the part of civic religion—wanting only to prohibit gay marriage—and what is the part of authentic enthusiasm?

And at the Mason Temple, in that concrete building, half mall, half bunker, where the church's headquarters are and where I'll have a chance, a few hours later, to interview the international presiding bishop, Gilbert E. Patterson; in this Vatican of Pentecostalism, which resembles the center of operations for a holding company more than a house of God, and where all the ministers I meet look like lawyers and all the lawyers look like bodyguards, and where Patterson himself, with his heavy gold jewelry, looks more like a prince of the church than a humble preacher—how can you, in all the bustling activity of this place, disentangle what is ostentatious display and calculating stagecraft from what has to do with the legitimate management of the interests of a church with six or seven million members?

I don't know. I'm incapable of deciding, in all honesty.

But that there exists another kind of religiousness present; that there is in this church and perhaps beyond it, in the big black churches of the South, a quality of bliss that you don't find elsewhere; that there is, at the root, in the population of the faithful themselves, an intensity of piety that has nothing to do with what can be observed in the megachurches of the North—of that I am convinced.

TRAGIC BALL IN LITTLE ROCK

They've been talking about it for months. For weeks the question of being there or not being there was the ultimate one for the beautiful people of New York and Washington. Bono and Barbra Streisand announced they'd be there. Dozens of government officials let it be known that they'd be present or at least represented. Thousands, tens of thousands, of ordinary citizens, from all corners of the country, invaded the city's hotels yesterday. Since it sometimes seems that in America the sole purpose of all history is to end up in a museum, I even overhear a group of Democrats from Tennessee who claim that on the very night of his election in November of 1992 William Jefferson Clinton sent out the first solicitations for contributions toward the building of his monument. They say they began to reserve their places three years ago, to make sure. In short, it is Clinton's big day. It is the moment, so eagerly awaited, when a former president, inaugurating his library, calls the world to witness the glory of his rule. And in this case, everything, truly everything—the beauty of the building and its futurism; its purpose as a boon for Arkansas and a link between generations; its \$165 million budget; its 80 million presidential papers exhibited or stored; the quality of the production; the siting of the reviewing stands out in the open, facing the glass-and-steel building; the live telecast of the entire ceremony on giant screens—was planned to transform this dedication into an apotheosis

of the Clinton years and what they represent. Alas, that didn't take into account three meager grains of sand that would be enough to throw everything off ...

The former president's health, first of all. That wretched heart operation he had to undergo two months back, from which you can sense immediately, whatever they say, he hasn't completely recovered. His voice is good, certainly. It's the voice of the perennial Clinton, cheeky and firm, tinged with a southern lilt and full of authority. But in his thinness, in the slight awkwardness of his step when he gets up to walk to the podium, in his rather childlike way of squeezing Hillary's hand very hard in moments of intense emotion, there is a new frailty.

Then the elections. John Kerry's historic defeat, still recent, the extent of which no one would have imagined a few days ago. It's not Clinton's defeat, of course. Maybe a part of him even obscurely wished for it. But finally, there it is, present in everyone's mind, lending the gathering a quality that's inevitably sepulchral. And it has one little consequence that I'm convinced neither he nor any of his

"If my beloved mother were here, she'd try to remind me that rain is liquid sunshine." But you can feel that his heart isn't in it. You can see that the dimness of the sky only adds to his own sadness. "Thanks for coming," he says to Bush, in a humble tone I'm not sure he's feigning. And you have only to observe the Bushes—to see their satisfied smiles when the camera frames them and projects them onto the big screen, to hear George W. explaining, not without ferocity, that the greatest success of the man we've come to honor is "his daughter"—to understand that from their point of view, the affair leaves no room for doubt: Heaven, as usual, has cast its vote—and it has voted Republican.

The stands, which we were told had been overbooked, begin to thin out. Hillary, who planned a long speech, makes do with a few words. Chelsea looks bored. Jimmy Carter looks cold. The noteworthy Democrats, who came to be seen, hide under umbrellas and are so wet that when the camera zooms in, you can barely recognize them. There's Al Gore, his face strangely swollen. Kerry—or, rather, his shadow, almost his ghost, glimpsed for half a



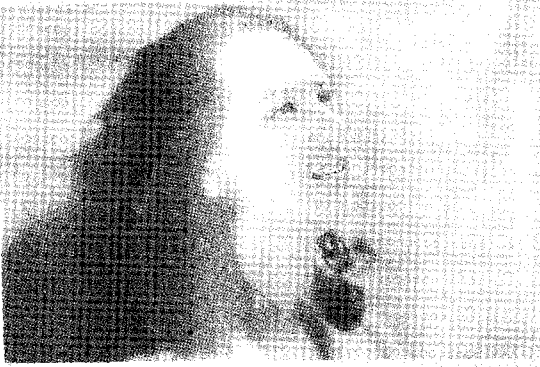
Since I've been in the United States I haven't seen a storm as violent as the one that's been beating down on Arkansas since morning. "Welcome to my rainy library dedication," Clinton says, attempting to joke. But you can feel that his heart isn't in it.

advisers foresaw: since protocol calls for the presence at his side of the sitting president and all other ex-presidents still living, the said sitting president being named George W. Bush and another George Bush being among the ex-presidents, here is the hero of the day framed by two Bushes. Worse, since each of the two Bushes is himself flanked by a Mrs. Bush, Clinton is boxed in not by two but by four Bushes, whose insolent health, seemingly modest but actually triumphant smiles, thick brown or navy-blue wool coats, belted carefully at the waist, upturned at the throat, only emphasize Clinton's new fragility.

And then, to top it all off, the weather. Weather is so ridiculous. It's the uncontrollable, hence neutral, parameter par excellence. But there's weather and there's weather, and since I've been in the United States I haven't seen a storm as violent as the one that's been beating down on Arkansas since morning. So, because the ceremony was planned to take place outdoors, now the whole population of Clintonians, journalists, ambassadors, guests of honor, heads of state, orators, find themselves under umbrellas in an icy rain, with end-of-the-world lightning. "Welcome to my rainy library dedication," Clinton says, attempting to joke.

second and given timid applause. It's not an apotheosis; it's a debacle. It's not a glorification; it's one more step in the descent to hell that began in Boston fifteen days ago, when Kerry conceded—or maybe, who knows, that began with the Lewinsky affair, six years ago. It's not even that cozy family reunion the Democrats had hoped for; it's not even "time recaptured," when different generations come to see each other before starting in again on their conquest of power—or else it is, but in the Proustian sense, like the terrible ball at the Guermantes' where all the guests are suddenly seen to be twenty years older and appear like caricatures of themselves. For that's the ultimate effect of this lugubrious ballet, that it seems somehow to recoil from the scene it should be celebrating—a bit like in those anamorphoses, where all you need is a mirror, or a change in the angle of your gaze, to deform the whole tableau, in this case the whole Clinton era. His famous legacy suddenly seems altered by the reflected light of this gloomy, twilit, graceless day. What are the final results of the Clinton era, after all? The Balkans, true. The Near East, if you like. The memory, already faded, of prosperity, okay. But from now on this eclipse, too, this disaster. ▀

ERICH SCHLEGEL/CORBIS



Has anyone ever called you crazy?

For the way you dress?

The things you say?

What if you left for two years?

Moved to another country.

To live with people you don't know.

Where no one speaks your language.

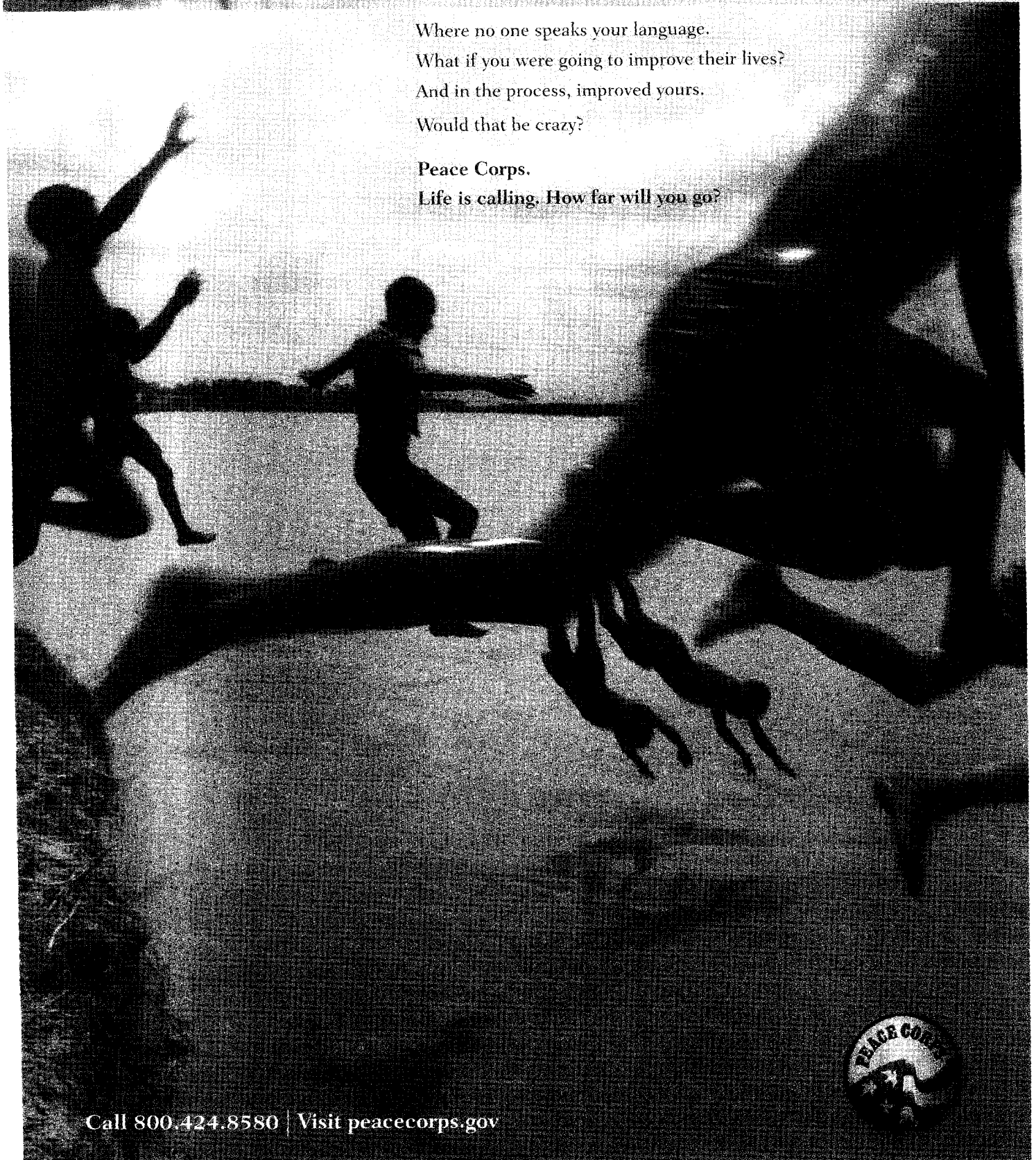
What if you were going to improve their lives?

And in the process, improved yours.

Would that be crazy?

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THERE'S NOT ENOUGH ART IN OUR SCHOOLS.

NO WONDER PEOPLE SAY
"GESUNDHEIT" WHEN YOU SAY
"TCHAIKOVSKY."

If one were to make a quick list of the world's favorite composers, despite his relatively recent vintage Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky would be on it. After all, he did compose *Swan Lake*, which is perhaps the

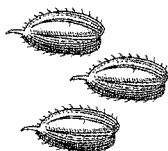
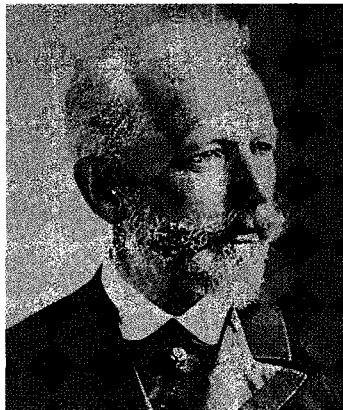


Fig 1 Pollen

Causes watery eyes. Much like Tchaikovsky's composition "Romeo and Juliet."

most famous ballet of all time. And there can't be more than just a handful of ballet companies that don't perform *The Nutcracker* every Christmas.

Indeed, this great Romantic composer should be so immortalized. As a young man, he pursued a career in music at enormous personal risk and against his own father's advice. His mild temperament combined with his tendency to work too hard left him with insomnia, debilitating headaches and hallucinations. On top of that, Tchaikovsky's composition teacher never liked his work,



Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky endured many setbacks, not the least of which was a blind barber.

even after he became world-famous.

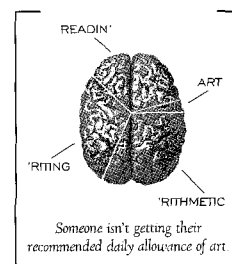
Setbacks like these could have finished a lesser man. Instead, they informed his work, which remains some of the best loved in history. Yet some kids will still confuse Tchaikovsky with a nasal spasm.

Why? Because the arts are slowly but surely being eliminated from today's schools, even though a

majority of the parents believe music and drama and dance and art make their children better students and better people.

To help reverse this disturbing trend, or for more information

about all the many benefits of arts education, visit us at AmericansForTheArts.org. Or else Tchaikovsky could seem like just another casualty of allergy season.



ART. ASK FOR MORE.



For more information about the importance of arts education, contact www.AmericansForTheArts.org.



NORTH KOREA: THE WAR GAME

Dealing with North Korea could make Iraq look like child's play—and the longer we wait, the harder it will get. That's the message of a Pentagon-style war game involving some of this country's most prominent foreign-policy strategists

BY SCOTT STOSSEL

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On the third weekend in March, while America was transfixed by the most exciting NCAA basketball tournament in years, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was in the Far East, in the midst of a series of meetings with her opposite numbers in six Asian countries. Arriving in Seoul, South Korea, on Saturday, she boarded a U.S. Army Black Hawk helicopter and flew to Command Post Tango, the underground bunker that would be the nerve center for the U.S. military in the event of a war against North Korea. While not quite on the order of Ariel Sharon's parading around the Temple Mount in Israel, Rice's move was undeniably provocative. No high-ranking American official had ever visited the bunker before—and the choice of a military site as the secretary of state's first stop seemed to represent a gentle rattling of the sword. What's more, Rice spoke against a backdrop of computers and television screens monitoring the 20,000 South Korean and American soldiers who were at that very moment engaging in one of their regular war-game exercises—practicing, in effect, to fight a war with North Korea no sane person hopes ever to see.

The North Koreans responded by rattling their sword right back. First they announced they were boosting their nuclear arsenal, as a "deterrent" against U.S. attack. And then, apparently, they began to act: a few weeks after Rice's visit, U.S. spy satellites detected a reduction in activity at the Yongbyon nuclear reactor. Possibly this meant that the reactor had run into mechanical trouble; more probably, it meant that the North Koreans had shut down the plant to

withdraw spent fuel rods in order to reprocess them into fissile material for nuclear weapons. What was clear was that the situation represented a grave international crisis.



North Korea's Kim Jong Il

tain decisions and plans of action. The result was a bracing corrective to the notion that Iran's nuclear capacity could be taken out with a quick military strike.

The North Korean situation is also ripe for war-game treatment, because of the extraordinarily difficult military and diplomatic challenges it presents. Iran, considered an urgent national-security priority, is thought to be three to five years away from possessing even a single nuclear device. North Korea is widely believed to have as many as ten already, and to be producing more every year. (It is also the first developing nation thought to be capable of striking the continental United States with a long-range ballistic missile.) And whereas Iraq did not, after all, have weapons of mass destruction, North Korea is believed to have large stockpiles of chemical weapons (mustard gas, sarin, VX nerve agent) and biological weapons (anthrax, botulism, cholera, hemorrhagic fever, plague, smallpox, typhoid, yellow fever). An actual war on the Korean peninsula would almost certainly be the bloodiest America has fought since Vietnam—possibly since World War II. In recent years Pentagon experts have estimated that the first ninety days of such a conflict might produce 300,000 to

500,000 South Korean and American military casualties, along with hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths. The damage to South Korea alone would rock the global economy.

Scott Stossel is an Atlantic senior editor and the author of Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver (2004).

All-out war, however, is not the only—or even the gravest—threat North Korea currently poses to U.S. security. For some years now the fear that has kept homeland-defense experts awake at night is that terrorists will detonate a nuclear bomb in an American city. In fact, the danger that Saddam Hussein would sell nukes to terrorists was a basic rationale for invading Iraq in at least some of the Bush administration's iterations of it. But North Korea is, if anything, more likely than Saddam to do so, if it hasn't already. The country's weak economy has owed its continued functioning in part to the income from vast smuggling networks (primarily for drugs and counterfeit foreign currency) and sales of missiles and other arms to such fellow outlaw nations as Libya, Iran, Syria, and Iraq. At some point the North Koreans may decide they have more than enough nuclear weapons for their own purposes and sell the extras for cash. The longer North Korea keeps producing nukes, in other words, the greater the likelihood that one will find its way to New York or Washington.

Unfortunately, trying to take out the regime's nuclear sites with surgical strikes—an iffy proposition at best, since we don't know where some of the sites are—might provoke a horrific war. And trying to create regional nuclear deterrence by allowing South Korea, Japan, and even Taiwan to become nuclear powers would undermine the global nonproliferation system that has been in place for more than forty years. The North Korean regime may be fundamentally undeterrable anyway: President Kim Jong Il has reportedly said that he would “destroy the world” or “take the world with me” before accepting defeat on the battlefield. And as bad as Kim is, what comes after him could be worse. A complete collapse of the regime might lead not only to enormous refugee problems for China and South Korea but also, in effect, to a weapons-of-mass-destruction yard sale for smugglers.

There are still other dangers. If we did successfully invade, our troops would be likely to eventually find themselves near North Korea's Chinese border. The last time that happened, in 1950, the Chinese counterinvaded. (A 1961 treaty obliges China to do so again in the event of an attack on North Korea.) Meanwhile, other nations—most notably Iran—are watching carefully to see whether North Korea will be allowed to become an official nuclear power without reprisal.

All of which is to say that any move in North Korea is fraught with potentially disastrous implications. Time is not on our side, as the shutdown of the Yongbyon reactor in April makes clear; the longer we wait to take action, the more nuclear weapons Kim Jong Il may build, and the more threatening he will become. Something needs to be done. But what?

The seeds of the current crisis were planted late in the winter of 1993, when North Korea declared that proposed International Atomic Energy Agency inspections of two of its nuclear sites represented an unwarranted violation of sovereignty. The Kim regime subsequently threatened to begin converting 8,000 spent fuel rods from its Yongbyon plant into weaponizable nuclear material. As tensions rose, Pyongyang became more belligerent, at one point reminding the South Koreans that it wouldn't be hard to turn Seoul into “a sea of fire.” The United States, for its part, contemplated pre-emptive strikes on Yongbyon.

By the spring of 1994 the United States was probably closer to nuclear war than it had been since the Cuban Missile Crisis. On June 15 President Clinton and others sat in the White House Cabinet Room listening to Secretary of Defense William Perry present an array of military options against North Korea. Clinton was preparing to evacuate American civilians from the country when word came that Jimmy Carter—who was in Pyongyang as an independent citizen, not as an official emissary of the Clinton administration—had reached a preliminary deal with the North Koreans and was about to go on CNN to announce the terms. The parties returned to the negotiating table, and in October of 1994 they signed the so-called Agreed Framework. In

As bad as Kim is, what comes after him could be worse. A complete collapse of the regime might create what would be, in effect, a weapons-of-mass-destruction yard sale for smugglers.

exchange for North Korea's freezing nuclear-weapons development, the United States, South Korea, and Japan would supply Pyongyang with light-water nuclear reactors and with 500,000 metric tons of heavy fuel oil annually.

Congressional Republicans attacked the agreement, calling it “appeasement.” The North Koreans eventually cheated on it, a fact nobody disputes; but some have argued that the Agreed Framework was a success despite the cheating. It averted an imminent war, and it shut down the North Korean plutonium program for nine years—thereby limiting Pyongyang's arsenal to one or two nuclear weapons as of 2002, rather than the nearly 100 it might otherwise have been able to develop by then.

In the summer of 2002 U.S. intelligence discovered that the North Koreans had secretly restarted their weapons development using highly enriched uranium. When Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly went to Pyongyang in October of 2002 to confront the North Koreans, he expected them to deny the existence of the uranium program. They didn't; in fact, evidently they soon restarted their plutonium program, by continuing to reprocess the

8,000 spent fuel rods from Yongbyon (which had been in storage since the signing of the Agreed Framework). In October of 2003 the North Koreans said they had finished the reprocessing—meaning, if true, that they had enough fissile material for up to six new nuclear weapons. The Bush administration, not wanting to appear to reward bad behavior, has since adamantly refused to negotiate directly with the North Koreans. Six-party talks involving China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea—regional powers that the Bush administration hoped could help hold the Kim regime to account—began in August of 2003, but after the third round of talks, last June, the North Koreans pulled out, demanding direct bilateral negotiations with the United States.

All this loomed in the background when, six days after Condoleezza Rice's visit to Command Post Tango, *The Atlantic* convened a North Korea war game of its own, in Washington, D.C. The assembled knowledge was extensive, and the range of Washington viewpoints more or less complete—hawk to dove, right to left, neocon to realist.

As in our Iran war game, Colonel Sam Gardiner led the proceedings. (Gardiner has run war games for more than twenty years at the National War College and various other military institutions; the strategy that General Tommy Franks used to seize Baghdad in 2003 had its origins in a game Gardiner had designed some fifteen years earlier.) And once again the premise of the game was a meeting of the "Principals Committee"—the highest-ranking national-security officials of an imaginary U.S. presidential administration—to generate recommendations for the president. Gardiner explained that he would be presenting to the principals a military briefing from the perspective of the commander of the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM).

Playing the part of the CIA director was David Kay—a man well equipped for this job. In the early 1990s Kay served as the chief nuclear-weapons inspector for the IAEA and the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq, and in June of 2003 he was asked by the actual CIA director to lead the Iraq Survey Group that searched for (and never found) WMD in Iraq after the U.S. invasion.

The secretary of state in this exercise was Robert Gallucci. The dean of the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, at Georgetown University, Gallucci has extensive real-world experience in dealing with North Korea. In 1994 he served as the Clinton administration's chief negotiator with the North Koreans during the crisis that ultimately produced the Agreed Framework. Gallucci did not have to overtax his imagination for this simulation: he had been present at the real versions of such meetings in the White House, including one in June of 1994, when the president considered ordering military strikes on the Yongbyon reactor.

Lieutenant General Thomas McInerney, who spent thirty-five years in the U.S. Air Force as a pilot, a commander, and a strategic planner, played the role of Chair-

man of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. McInerney conducted flight reconnaissance missions during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and later completed four tours of duty in Vietnam. From the late 1970s to the early 1990s he served predominantly in the Pacific theater. While there he watched by means of satellite photography as the North Koreans constructed bunkers and artillery installations in the mountains north of Seoul. A military analyst for Fox News, McInerney last year argued in *Endgame: The Blueprint for Victory in the War on Terror* (written with Paul E. Valletly) that the key to stopping the spread of terrorism is regime change. McInerney thinks we should force regime change on not only North Korea (if it doesn't give up its nuclear program) but also Syria (if it doesn't end its support of terrorism and surrender the WMD that he believes were smuggled there from Iraq) and Saudi Arabia (if Islamic radicals seize power there).

Filling the newly created position of director of national intelligence was Jessica Mathews, the president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (Mathews and McInerney had clashed over Iraq, and their animosity was easy to see; this lent extra verisimilitude to the exercise, since personal disputes over policy often color debates within administrations.) Mathews directed the National Security Council's Office of Global Issues from 1977 to 1979, and served as deputy to the undersecretary of state for global affairs under President Clinton.

Rounding out the Principals Committee was Kenneth Adelman, who would be serving as secretary of defense. A current member of the Defense Policy Board, Adelman has held a number of positions in Republican administrations. In the mid-1970s he was assistant to President Ford's secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld; later he was a key member of Ronald Reagan's foreign-policy team, serving for two years as deputy UN ambassador and for four years as head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Like Gallucci and Mathews, Adelman is a veteran of real NSC meetings.

"Let's play," Sam Gardiner said. He announced that he had a memo from the Pentagon asking for a review of the status of our plans for North Korea. He reminded the group that it had been two and a half years since we had told the North Koreans we knew about their clandestine uranium-enrichment program, and nearly two years since international six-party talks had begun—yet the crisis had if anything only deepened.

Gardiner reviewed some of the basic facts about North Korea's conventional military capabilities. The North Korean People's Army, he observed, is the fifth biggest military in the world, with more than 1.2 million active-duty troops and 7 million reservists. One of the most notable components of the People's Army is its highly trained Special Operations Forces—the North Korean equivalent of Saddam Hussein's elite Republican Guard. Consisting

of some 125,000 troops, the SOF may be the largest such force in the world. In the event of a conflict on the peninsula, Gardiner said, we would find ourselves not only engaging these troops along the border but also combating their sneak attacks from the rear. Displaying a PowerPoint slide that depicted North Korean tunneling operations along the demilitarized zone since the 1970s, Gardiner observed that the SOF would get behind the front lines not only through hidden tunnels that U.S. and South Korean intelligence agencies have yet to find (one of them, according to the journalist Jasper Becker's new book, *Rogue Regime: Kim Jong Il and the Looming Threat of North Korea*, is large enough for 30,000 infantrymen to pass through in an hour) but also in small aircraft, boats, and midget submarines. We're improving our ability to contend with the SOF, Gardiner said. But it remains a "big deal."

Next he summarized the North Korean missile program: the medium-range No-Dong missiles that can hit Japan; the 1,200-mile Taepo Dong 1 missiles; and the Taepo Dong 2, which could theoretically strike the continental United States. The Taepo Dong 2, Gardiner said, "changes the strategic equation significantly."

Gardiner paused to get initial assessments from the Principals Committee. CIA Director David Kay responded first, noting that what confounds policymaking on North Korea is how little anyone actually knows about the country. "We *believe* a lot," he observed. "We actually *know* very little." Kay thought that the principal objective of U.S. intelligence at this point should be to determine the extent of any connection between North Korea's nuclear program and groups outside the country.

Secretary of State Gallucci spoke next. "This is a country," he said, "that has exported ballistic missiles when no other country on earth is exporting ballistic missiles—a country that has threatened explicitly to export nuclear material." What is so frightening about this prospect, Gallucci said, is that traditional deterrent methods won't work. "If there's an incident," he continued, "the worst we can imagine, the detonation of a weapon in an American city, will we have attribution? Will we be able to track it back to North Korea? Is there any deterrence against [the export of nuclear materials] by a desperate state?"

Secretary of Defense Adelman disagreed with the idea that we don't know what North Korea's intentions are. "We *do* know what North Korea's strategy is: it is obviously to deter us from attacking them like we attacked Iraq," Adelman said he thought there was "no hope" of changing North Korea's behavior through conventional diplomacy. "Having talks as an objective of U.S. policy is a diplomatic move that gets you nothing," he said. "I know Winston Churchill said it's better to jaw-jaw than to war-war, but there's lots of jaw-jawing that leads to war-war, or that has nothing to do with war-war. So let's not spend time on whether we should get back to 'talks.'" Instead, Adelman said, we should try to induce the Chinese to

lean on the North Koreans to give up their nuclear program. How? By scaring them with the prospect of a nuclear South Korea, a nuclear Japan, and possibly a nuclear Taiwan. Once the Chinese recognize that they'll soon be looking at multiple nuclear powers in the region if they don't force the North Koreans to disarm, Adelman argued, they'll be compelled to use leverage against North Korea—by, for example, cutting off its food and fuel supplies.

Director of National Intelligence Mathews returned to Kay's point regarding how little we really know of North Korea. We know far less about North Korea's nuclear program than we do about Iran's, she said. "Uncertainty is the thing that has to underlie the rest of our discussion. There's very little we can say that we know with confidence, either politically or technically, about North Korea." She agreed with Kay and Gallucci about the real danger to our national security: "This is a regime that will sell anything." And she disagreed with Adelman about whether the Chinese could effectively influence the North Koreans. The Chinese, she pointed out, would be reluctant to do anything that might topple the regime and cause a huge flow of refugees across their border.

Finally, Mathews said that we have never really tested whether the right combination of political promises, security assurances, and economic aid would induce the North Koreans to give up their nuclear weapons. "I'm not saying they *would* give up their nuclear weapons," she said. "I'm saying we don't know the answer to this absolutely crucial question." Before we resort to more extreme measures, she said, we ought to try to answer it. She proposed that we begin by offering to sign a treaty formally ending the Korean War. (Hostilities ceased in 1953 with the signing of an armistice and the drawing of the DMZ, along the 38th parallel—but no peace treaty was signed, which means that technically the United States and North Korea are still at war.)

"That would say something to a paranoid regime," Mathews continued. "It doesn't mean anything to us; we don't think the Korean War is still going on. But it says something to them. It may be a very valuable bargaining chip, and we've never spent it."

Joint Chiefs Chairman McNerney agreed that the greatest national-security threat posed by North Korea was nuclear transfer, and he echoed Gallucci's concern that deterrence will not protect against nuclear terrorism. General McNerney was more willing than the other principals to contemplate military action, and more sanguine about how easy a war with North Korea would be to win. "I don't think we're concerned that they could overrun the South, because they can't," he said. "Militarily, we are far superior to them. Would there be a lot of carnage? Yes, there'd be a lot of carnage. Would we win? Yes, we would win. Would we win quicker than we did in Operation Iraqi Freedom? Optimistically, I'd say we could. More likely, it would take an extra month. But the fact is, we would win."

To prevent North Korea's nuclear capability from creating

an imbalance of power, McNerney proposed stationing U.S. nuclear weapons in South Korea and Japan. During the Cold War, he explained, various NATO countries “sat alert” on U.S. nuclear weapons. The weapons were on European aircraft, but the United States dictated when they could be deployed.

North Korea, he conceded, has the potential to use Seoul, which lies only thirty-five miles south of the DMZ, as a “hostage”—to threaten to turn it into that “sea of fire.” But he strenuously disagreed that this means “a military option is not thinkable,” as some U.S. policymakers say. “A military option is clearly thinkable, and doable,” he argued. “If threatened with the transfer of nuclear weapons from North Korea to terrorists, we *have* to do something.”

Gardiner, in his role as PACOM commander, resumed his briefing. He displayed a map of Korea that depicted the expected North Korean attack routes. Because of the mountainous terrain along the border, the conventional forces of the People’s Army would be limited



North Korean tunnel operations under the DMZ

to a few corridors that would be highly vulnerable to U.S. air power. The bottom line: we could easily repel a conventional ground attack.

But, he continued, there are two degrees of desirable victory: “swiftly defeating” the bad guys, and “winning decisively.” In a swift defeat escalation is controlled; victory is rapid enough that the conflict remains limited and conventional. In winning decisively the scope of the victory and the number of troops on the ground are sufficient to carry out postwar stability operations. In Iraq, U.S. forces swiftly defeated the enemy (the war was quick and didn’t metastasize) but did not win decisively (a big reason why the military aftermath of Operation Iraqi Freedom has been so protracted).

Gardiner explained that to control escalation in North Korea, the United States, using its air power, would first have to take out North Korea’s aging air force. Though

many enemy aircraft are bunkered in mountain redoubts, this would be easy. But one major problem could keep us from taking rapid control of the peninsula: chemical weapons. Citing congressional testimony given by General Leon LaPorte, the commander of U.S. forces in Korea, Gardiner said that North Korea’s chemical weapons could be a “show-stopper.” “The chemical-weapon thing is big,” he said. “We have reason to believe that the chemical weapons are with the forward artillery units that are targeting Seoul. If we don’t get those early, we end up with chemicals on Seoul.”

Next Gardiner projected a PowerPoint slide showing the range of a Taepo Dong 1 missile overlaid on a map of East Asia. It demonstrated that such a missile launched from the Korean peninsula could reach not only Tokyo, Okinawa, and Beijing but also the U.S. base in Guam. To prevent escalation, Gardiner said, we would need to take out the No-Dong and Taepo Dong missile sites quickly—which would not be easy, because we don’t know where those missiles are. Many are hidden in underground bunkers throughout North Korea. The PACOM commander’s conclusion: “It’s a difficult target set, but we can do it.”

We would also, of course, need to take out the nuclear sites. Gardiner flashed a map of North Korea’s known nuclear-related facilities on the screen, and then showed a series of satellite photos of various WMD targets. Many of the targets were tucked away in underground tunnels or at least partially obscured by what arrows on the photos labeled as “hill masses.” “You begin to see how difficult a target set this is,” Gardiner said.

“Is that a euphemism for undoable?” Secretary of Defense Adelman asked.

“No, not at all,” Gardiner said. General McNerney practically jumped out of his chair to say “No!”

Gardiner continued, explaining that the first few days of the fight would be critical if we were to have any chance of protecting Seoul. To do so, we would have to get the chemical-delivery systems, the missile sites, and the nuclear sites before the North Koreans had a chance to use them. To accomplish all this we would need to carry out 4,000 air sorties a day in the first days of the conflict. In Iraq, in contrast, we had carried out 800 a day.

Director of National Intelligence Mathews disagreed that Seoul could be shielded: “My understanding is that we *cannot* protect Seoul, at least for the first twenty-four hours of a war, and maybe for the first forty-eight.” McNerney disputed this, and Mathews asked him to explain.

McNerney: “There’s a difference between ‘protecting’ Seoul and [limiting] the amount of damage Seoul may take.”

Mathews: “There are a hundred thousand Americans in Seoul, not to mention ten million South Koreans.”

McNerney: “A lot of people are going to die, Jessica. But you still prevail.”

Mathews: “I just think we’ve got to be really careful. We’ve got to protect Seoul. If your daughter were living in

Seoul, I don't think you would feel the U.S. military could protect her in those first twenty-four hours."

McInerney: "No, I do. I believe that we have the capability—whether from pre-emption or response—to minimize the casualties in Seoul."

Mathews: "'Minimize' to roughly what level? A hundred thousand? Two hundred thousand?"

McInerney: "I think a hundred thousand or less."

Only a hard-nosed military strategist, of course, can contemplate 100,000 casualties as coolly as McInerney did. He went on to argue that—assuming 4,000 sorties a day, and given our current targeting technology, combined with the fact that the artillery systems firing on Seoul would be fairly concentrated around the DMZ—we would be able to mitigate the lethality of North Korean strikes on Seoul. Gallucci added that the North Koreans would be foolish to waste their artillery on Seoul. "It is insane

that shows we can mitigate *that*." When McInerney began to argue that maybe we could disable their nuclear missiles before they were fired, Kay retorted, "Our record of attacking mobile missiles in Iraq is not very good."

"That's why our policy must clearly state that for every nuke they use, we will use a hundred," McInerney said.

The other members of the Principals Committee seemed taken aback by this statement.

Gardiner tried to resume his briefing by summing up the sentiment of the committee. "None of the military options is easy—"

Adelman interrupted. "That's a euphemism. Let's talk directly: it would be disastrous."

Mathews agreed. "We can only reach the targets we know about. You can't target targets you don't know about, and there are a whole bunch of them."

"And some targets we do know about, but we don't know where they are," Kay added. "And that's most of the missile force."

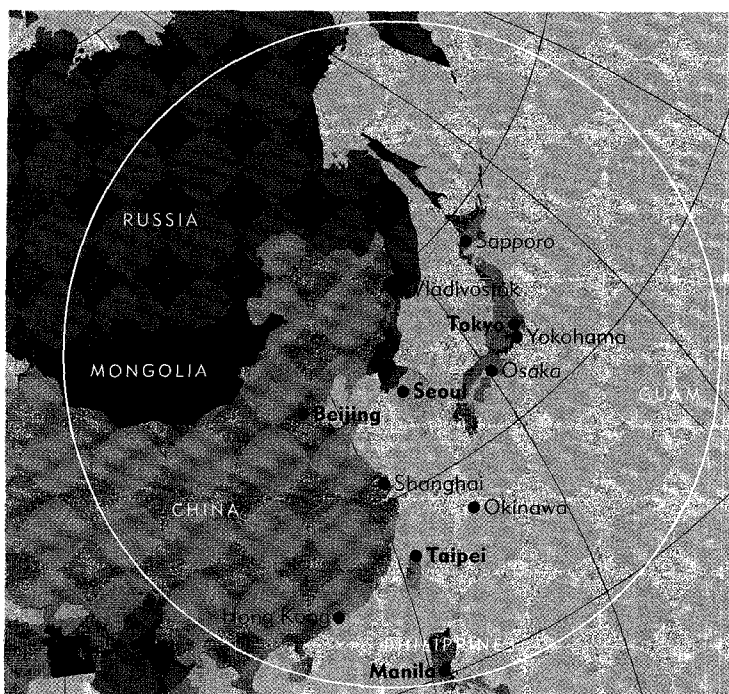
The consensus was that Seoul could not be guaranteed protection. And McInerney, who dissented from that consensus, was projecting up to 100,000 casualties in South Korea in the first few days.

Gardiner moved on to the next phase of his briefing, which involved placing the North Korean situation in the context of the U.S. military's other global commitments. President Bush, he reminded the principals, has said that "all options are on the table" with respect to Iran. But if all options (including invasion) are truly on the table for dealing with Iran, Gardiner announced, "then I have to tell you that we cannot do this operation—either in defense or pre-emption—on the peninsula." There simply aren't enough available troops. Hundreds of thousands of troops are tied up because of Iraq. Tens or hundreds of thousands more would be required for Iran, even if we intended only to make a credible show of force rather than actually invade.

Gardiner also pointed out that U.S. military planners have called for a drawdown in the number of American troops stationed in South Korea over the next few years—from 37,500 in 2004 to 25,000 by 2008. Because of our overwhelming air and naval superiority, we still have the "overmatching" capability to defeat a conventional attack. But, he said, "I can't assure that we can swiftly defeat or win decisively." He also said that as the size of his force diminished, he was losing his capacity to deter a North Korean attack.

David Kay observed that since the greatest national-security threat, everyone agreed, was not a North Korean invasion of South Korea but, rather, the North Korean transfer of nuclear material to terrorists, the essential question was how big a force was needed for a pre-emptive attack, not how big a force was needed to deter invasion.

Gardiner argued that we have the capability to deter the North Koreans from either course by threatening to launch



Possible strike range of Taepo Dong 1 missiles launched from North Korea

for them if they are engaged in ground combat," he said. "They're going to be in desperate need of that artillery for support of ground operations."

McInerney agreed: "If they try to use Seoul as an artillery target, we would destroy their army that much quicker."

Secretary of Defense Adelman was skeptical that the North Koreans would use the same strategy to "break through" that they had when they successfully overran the South in 1950. David Kay reminded everybody that one key difference between 1950 and today is that North Korea may now have "between one and ten nukes, and adequate delivery methods," meaning "they can take out Seoul without using a single artillery round—and I haven't seen anything here



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nuclear weapons at them. He emphasized that he wasn't recommending that we launch nukes—only saying that a nuclear deterrent might work on the peninsula the way it did with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. McNerney agreed, and once again proposed lending some of our nuclear weapons to South Korea and Japan as a deterrent against the North. Gardiner recommended a strategy short of that: we should announce publicly, he suggested, that we are moving nuclear weapons—along with nuclear-capable aircraft and missiles—to Guam, and then keep them there as a deterrent while so many of our troops are tied down elsewhere.

Adelman said, "We have got to decide in this group whether to recommend to the president that we use the standard deterrence approach we have used for years"—that is, keeping a strong conventional force on the peninsula—"or whether we want to take a different approach and have *less* U.S. involvement in this thing." Adelman recommended the latter course, which he said would compel the South Koreans, the Japanese, and the Chinese to deal with the problem.

"You're forgetting the whole history of U.S. nonproliferation policy," Matthews said. "You're encouraging Japan to go nuclear."

"I'm not forgetting," Adelman said. "I may be overriding it."

Nobody else was comfortable with the idea of a nuclear Japan; Kay and Matthews objected that it would undermine long-standing U.S. policy, and McNerney objected because he thought existing treaties obliged us to keep Japan and South Korea under our own nuclear umbrella. Matthews proposed that they move on to the next item, since it was clear that "on this point we're going to have to go to the president with divided opinion."

Before moving on, however, Gardiner wanted to come to consensus about where to draw the "red line" (or lines), the crossing of which would trigger international sanctions—and perhaps ultimately a pre-emptive strike by U.S. forces. There was some discussion of whether a nuclear-weapons test would constitute a red-line violation. For Gallucci, it was the transfer of fissile material. "That needs not only to be laid down as a red line but reinforced repeatedly," he said.

"Would you do a pre-emptive attack if transfer happens?" Adelman asked.

"I would mean what I said: 'We will not tolerate that. And we will act against you.' That's all I would tell them."

"But in this room what would you say?" Gardiner asked.

Gallucci responded haltingly. "I would strike at whatever facility—within the context of our capabilities, the protection of Seoul. And I would ask for good advice on how we would do this to protect ourselves. But I would, either immediately or in the fullness of time, use force to end that regime."

McNerney was blunter. "I would say to the North Koreans, 'If a nuclear weapon or weapons go off in the United States, you are a target'"—even if we don't know for sure that North Korea was responsible.

Gallucci didn't want to do that. "The idea that if a nuclear weapon were detonated in an American city without attribution, we would tell North Korea we were going to attack them, does *not* sound like the United States of America. We have to do better than that. And I don't want to wait, by the way, for the detonation of a weapon. Let me be clear here: the trigger for my action is not detonation; the trigger is incontrovertible evidence that the North Koreans have transferred fissile material to a terrorist group."

"But you'll not get that incontrovertible evidence," McNerney said. "That's my point."

"I believe we have to begin to act before that happens," Gallucci said. "I would advocate—and I am now going to use softer language—moving toward the use of military force to deal with the accumulation of fissile material even *before* transfer. When exactly you do that—I think that's got to be squishy. I'm not prepared to tell you exactly when that is."

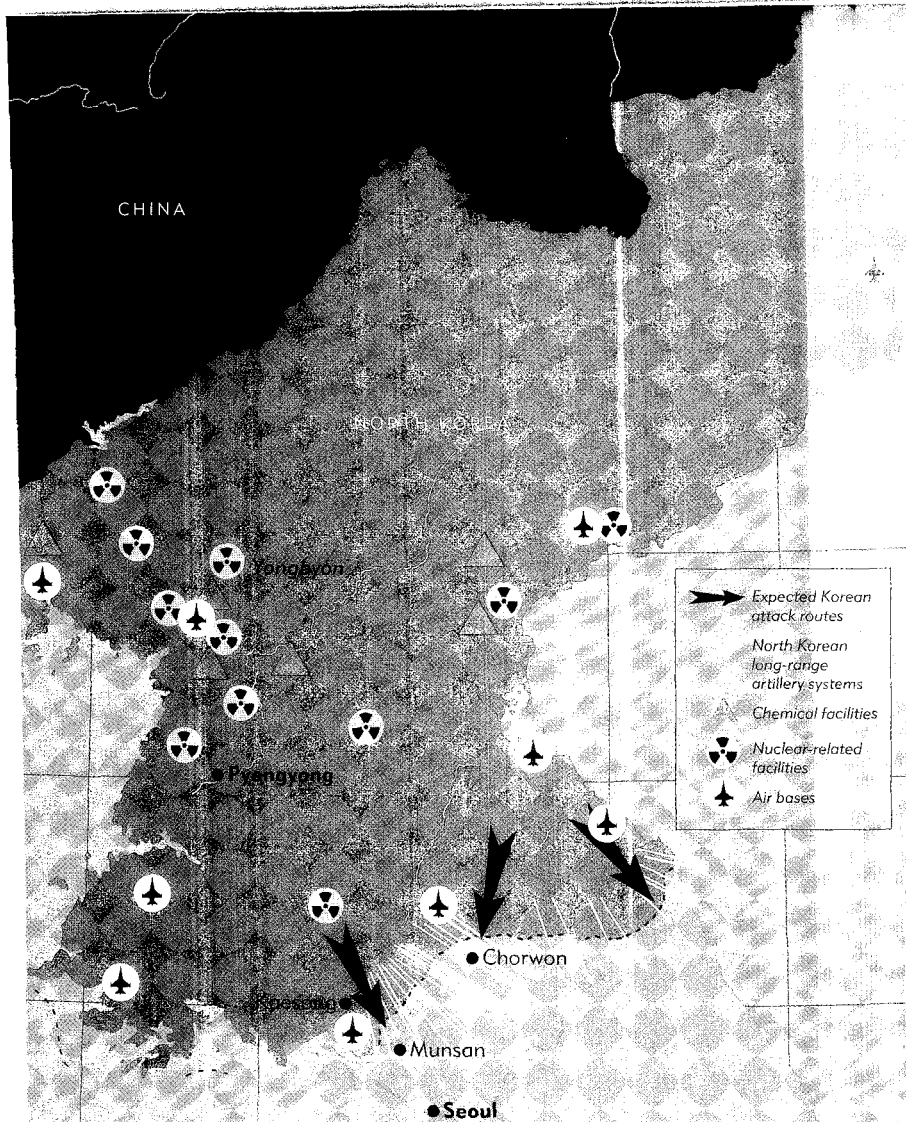
After a break in the proceedings, the game resumed. Gardiner explained how our understanding of the North Korean situation has changed in light of our experience in Iraq. Specifically, we now know how catastrophic "victory" can be. If the Kim regime were to collapse, the most urgent national-security priority would

General McNerney was more willing to contemplate military action. "Militarily, we are far superior to them. Would there be a lot of carnage? Yes, there'd be a lot of carnage. Would we win? Yes, we would win."

be securing all chemical, nuclear, and biological weapons facilities, to prevent smugglers and terrorists from seizing them. There would also be, he said, a monumental refugee and "internally displaced person" problem—North Koreans flooding south toward Seoul and north into China—that could become a large-scale tragedy if chemical weapons had been unleashed. And there would be the additional challenges—now quite familiar to us from Iraq—of restoring public security, figuring out how to reform existing security forces, establishing the basic outlines of a functional national government, and preventing a widespread humanitarian disaster.

Ken Adelman strongly disputed that the collapse of the Kim regime would be a problem. "When you win the lottery, you've got to worry about your tax payment. I'm just saying these are wonderful problems to have."

"If you're prepared for them," Kay said.



Some of the targets that U.S. forces would need to take out quickly in the event of war on the peninsula

Gardiner presented some numbers. Given the North Korean population of 23 million, and the number of U.S. troops it has taken to (not very successfully) maintain order and prevent looting in Iraq (population: 26 million), he estimated that it would take 500,000 ground troops to carry out stability operations. "These don't all have to be Americans, but if the historical record is correct we've got to have five hundred thousand somebodies in the North," he said.

Gardiner then came back to the question of timing. He displayed a graph that charted targeting difficulty and threat on the vertical axis against time on the horizontal axis. The graph showed that as time passes, and North Korea develops more nuclear weapons, the targeting challenges for the U.S. military grow considerably. It's hard enough to take out one or two—or eight or ten—nuclear devices if we don't know exactly where they are. The task of destroying fifteen or twenty, or eighty or a hundred, before any of them can be launched becomes substantially harder. And the threat that one of them will be sold to a terrorist greatly increases. "The problem of time is a *very* serious one," Gardiner said.

Gardiner summarized his assessment so far, and gave his PACOM recommendation to the Principals Committee. "The targeting dilemma is growing," he said. "We need to begin to plan seriously for the pre-emption option."

There was a moment of stunned silence. "What did you just say?" Adelman asked.

"We should prepare to pre-empt and change the regime in North Korea" within the next twelve to eighteen months, Gardiner said. "From a military perspective, to kick this can down the street doesn't make sense."

McNerney said pre-emption wouldn't be necessary if we had a strong enough nuclear deterrent. And Mathews said she thought everyone was too obsessively focused on the Korean threat, at the expense of attention to other dangers we risked exacerbating. "We have forty-five years of trying to build a world that's safe from nuclear weapons," she said. "I think we ought to keep in mind that we have an equal threat long-term having five or six nuclear powers in Asia. I think it does mean the collapse of the nonproliferation regime, and that's a serious threat to U.S. interests."

Kay remained more concerned about what would happen if the North Korean government fell. "The collapse of a nuclear, chemical, and biologically armed state is a serious national-security threat not just for us but for the whole world. We ought to have a contingency plan for what happens if that regime collapses. Because if you don't, Iraq is going to look like child's play."

Gardiner asked everyone to summarize. Based on the discussion in this meeting, what would they recommend that the president do?

David Kay went first. "The first thing that's clear to me out of this discussion is the importance of reinvigorating the diplomatic approach. Now, we may disagree to some degree about whether it can be a solo Chinese effort as opposed to a combined effort, but I think we all agree: of all the alternatives we've explored, a diplomatic approach that led to something would be far better, and less risky, than any of the others. The president has got to be told he's got to try to do this seriously—and it's better to do it sooner rather than later." Kay also observed that the North Korean crisis places an extraordinarily heavy burden on the intelligence system. If we agree that we would have to respond if North Korea transferred nuclear material to terrorists or accumulated more fissile material, then we've

got to be able to know with a high degree of confidence when those things have occurred. To simply say we think the lines *may* have been crossed is not enough.

Once the red line gets crossed, Kay said, "then you do have to start thinking about pre-emption. You also have to think about what happens if you win."

Robert Gallucci agreed about the need to "do something." He argued that we should use the Chinese "as aggressively as we can, within reason"—as long as we also recognize that for diplomacy to have a chance, we need both carrots and sticks. If diplomatic options do not work, Gallucci added, we need to turn to military ones. He concluded by highlighting Jessica Mathews's point that if we're not careful we could end up in a world that has more nuclear states. "That," he said, "would be catastrophic."

Ken Adelman said again that he didn't think diplomacy could work without more leverage from China, and that he would recommend to the president that we actively draw down our force strength in the region, thereby compelling this to become a Chinese problem. "I don't want the United States to take the traditional approach of reinforcing troops, adding nuclear weapons—all the things we've done over the last forty years. We need to give the region more responsibility."

Jessica Mathews disagreed with Gallucci that evidence of a transfer of nuclear material to terrorists would be grounds for war. "I think we get a real Pyrrhic victory," she said. "I don't think you get support out of South Korea. You're asking them to die, to destroy their country, because of a potential threat that some amount of plutonium or highly enriched uranium [might end up in] Washington."

McInerney asked her whether she would "rather wait until the first nuke goes off in the United States" before attacking.

"I'm just saying we're never going to have South Korean support for that policy," Mathews said. "It's just insanely not in their interest." (Gallucci disagreed, pointing out that in June of 1994 he thought the Clinton administration could have won South Korean support for military strikes on the Yongbyon complex, even though no one could have been sure that the conflict wouldn't escalate into a war.) Mathews advised that before we resort to pre-emption we should make absolutely sure we have truly tried all the diplomatic options. Until we do that, in her view, we won't be able to get international support for pre-emption. "I come back to a series of steps that would be low-cost," she said. "They want us to sign a treaty ending the Korean War? Just say yes. What on earth does it cost us? I don't think we've used all our diplomatic chips in this at all. Before we try military options that have huge costs associated with them, we should try this and prove to ourselves that [diplomacy] fails."

"The problem with that," Adelman said, "is that you never ever know that it failed. You can always say, 'Give me

another five years, Mr. President.' Nothing has ever 'failed' until there's an explosion."

McInerney said the key thing we need is better intelligence, so that we can know when terrorists have acquired nuclear materials, and know where Korea's WMD are located. With better intelligence, he said, North Korea becomes an easy military problem to solve conventionally. He repeated his call for placing U.S. nuclear weapons on South Korean and Japanese planes, as a deterrent against attack. And, addressing David Kay, he remarked that he couldn't afford to put 500,000 troops in North Korea if the Kim regime collapsed. "I would like to do it," he said, "but the resources aren't there."

Kay replied, "General, all I would say is that when [U.S. Army Chief of Staff] General Eric Shinseki told the secretary of defense [Rumsfeld] how many troops it would require in Iraq to maintain stability, he did the nation a great service. The secretary of defense did not [do a great service] by saying, 'We can't do it.' Because the problem was there."

"David, we may or may not agree on that number," McInerney said. "Our problem in Iraq has historically been intelligence. This is a small-unit problem—we need five hundred thousand or a million troops. And we don't have that." This conformed with Gardiner's earlier assessment: our military is in danger of being stretched so thin that the troops simply wouldn't be available.

Gardiner called time out, and the official part of the game was over.

At this point various experts who had been invited to watch the war game were asked to offer their observations. Chris Chyba, a former NSC staffer and the co-director of the Center for International Security and Cooperation, spoke first. "There's a ticking clock," he said. "Unfortunately, we don't know how much time is left on the clock." In his view, the biggest problem was how to deal with a red-line violation (namely, transfer of material to terrorists) that we aren't likely to know has occurred.

The next two observers were active-duty military officers who had also commented on *The Atlantic's* Iran war game. Marine Colonel Thomas X. Hammes, a counterinsurgency expert and the author of *The Sling and the Stone*, pointed out that everyone at the table kept saying it was unacceptable for North Korea to become a nuclear power—but everyone also seemed to believe that it already *is* a nuclear power. "So we're having a really stupid argument," he said. "We're the only people we're fooling."

Hammes disagreed with Ken Adelman's plan to have China pressure the North Koreans by cutting off their food supply. He argued that first, Kim Jong Il has already proved he doesn't care how many people he starves, and second, if we really do crank up the pressure on him we increase the likelihood of a "spasm attack" on Seoul. He also disagreed that we would need to ship 500,000 American troops to

the peninsula for stability operations if the regime collapsed. “There are about five hundred thousand South Korean infantrymen who can be mobilized in about four days,” he noted—infantrymen who, unlike most American peacekeeping troops, happen to speak Korean.

Army Major Donald Vandergriff, whose most recent book is *The Path to Victory*, worried that we could be caught off guard by a surprise attack on the South. U.S. intelligence has failed spectacularly in this regard before—think not just of Pearl Harbor and 9/11 but also of the North Korean invasion in 1950. And, he asked, what if North Korea doesn’t even try to fight a conventional war but resorts instead to “fourth-generation war,” relying heavily on commandoes, assassins, and sleeper cells in the South?

Ray McGovern, the co-founder of a group called Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, wanted to know why the Bush administration seemed so unwilling to use the diplomatic measures at its disposal.

“Let’s for goodness’ sake make our best effort at this,” Gallucci said, responding to McGovern’s question. “I remember briefing Jimmy Carter once, and he asked me in the middle of this briefing, just before he went to Pyongyang in June of 1994: ‘If we make a deal, will they honor it?’ And I said, ‘I actually have no idea.’ Well, now I do have an idea. You cannot count on it. Any deal we cut has to have verification elements in it. I would argue that we really were not hurt by that deal in 1994, that it actu-

To protect Seoul, we’d have to hit the North’s chemical-delivery systems, missile sites, and nuclear sites—all in the first few days. This would require 4,000 air sorties a day. In Iraq we carried out 800 a day.

ally did pretty well—even though they cheated. So I’m not sorry that we did that deal.” Gallucci said we should even be willing to offer the North Koreans a security assurance as part of a deal.

“If you’re saying we’re going to guarantee a Communist regime in North Korea, that’s a pretty lousy idea,” Adelman said.

“Is that what I said?” Gallucci responded, his choler rising. “I believe I said a ‘security assurance,’ and that I have always understood we would not attack them *provided* they abided by the deal. And that’s an assurance that I would be prepared to give. When we talked to them, I had an eye-to-eye opportunity to tell them what I thought of their regime. Kang Sok Ju [the leading North Korean negotiator] said to me, ‘You’re trying to strangle us.’ And I said, ‘Don’t get two things confused. If this works, we’re not going to be trying to strangle you; we’re going to be going into a new relationship. But don’t misunderstand me. We deplore your

regime. We believe it is horrendous. We believe you treat your people horribly.’”

Jessica Mathews suggested that one reason diplomacy has not yet been successful is that our own policymakers have been so divided on how to proceed. (This was most starkly revealed in March of 2001, when, one day after announcing that the Bush administration would continue the negotiations begun under Clinton, Secretary of State Colin Powell was humiliatingly contradicted by the president. “We don’t negotiate with evil,” Vice President Dick Cheney reportedly said in a meeting on North Korea; “we defeat it.”) “Any negotiation is a two-part deal,” Mathews said. “The first part you have with yourself. I would submit that this conversation makes it clear that we have not had that. We have no sense within this country of what it makes sense to do if you’re going to try to engage the North Koreans.”

“We used to call that, and still do, ‘appeasement,’” General McInerney said.

“I didn’t say anything about appeasement,” Mathews replied.

“I know, and you won’t say anything about it,” McInerney said. “One’s got to be very careful in taking the diplomatic route. Look, I commend Bob [Gallucci] for the work the Clinton administration tried in ’94. But let’s not live on the good ship *Lollipop* and think that we’re going to be able to do this again once they have shown that they are not going to negotiate [in good faith]. They *cheated* us.”

“What they have shown is if they can get away with cheating, they’ll cheat,” Mathews said. “Our job is to be smarter than that. Their having cheated gives us an opportunity to give them a tougher deal.”

“This is *precisely* the discussion that needs to take place,” David Kay said as the session ended. “And it is very clear why the president of the United States has to be present at the discussion. Otherwise we have an absolute stalemate. We don’t win on a stalemate in this case. And so you’ve got to decide what risk you’re willing to run now to avoid a greater risk later on. And only the president can make that decision.”

During the next few weeks I had conversations with all the members of the Principals Committee. What had they taken away from the war game? Despite the disputatiousness of the proceedings, was there any consensus about the lessons that could be drawn from the exercise?

There was. The first lesson was no surprise: This is not a situation that is going to get better with time. “Anyone who walks through the North Korea crisis comes through absolutely convinced that it is only going to get worse,”

David Kay told me. He came away from the exercise convinced of the situation's urgency—and convinced that the United States has wasted several years, effectively doing nothing while it hoped the regime would collapse. Kay believes that the administration's reluctance to engage the matter diplomatically is dangerous. And that was the second lesson at least three of the principals agreed on: We need—soon—to make a serious attempt at negotiating. "The Bush administration believes that the North Koreans cannot be relied upon to abide by international agreements," Kay said. "They also believe there are groups so bad that you harm yourself by talking to them. North Korea is a horrible regime—in human-rights terms, one of the worst on earth. But talking to them in no way compromises our moral beliefs." We need to take another crack at direct negotiation before we go the military route, he said.

For Jessica Mathews, this second lesson was the most important. She felt that the administration was hurting itself by insisting on participating only in multilateral talks, as opposed to direct negotiations with North Korea. "There's nothing in our national-security interest that is better served by multilateral versus bilateral talks. That's a shape-of-the-table issue. If we wanted to say, 'Okay, they want to have bilateral talks? Fine. We'll have a bilateral subcommittee within the six-party talks'—how long would that take to figure out? Half an hour." She added, "It's kind of odd that this administration, of all administrations, wants to outsource this policy issue to the Chinese."

A third lesson was that the transfer of nuclear material to terrorists is the biggest danger we face. General McNerney agreed with that, and with the idea that North Korea was an urgent matter (though he thought Iran was more pressing). But he disagreed on the importance of pursuing talks. In his view, people like Mathews and Gallucci, who are willing to pursue bilateral negotiations, are being naive. He also believes that it's important for Kim Jong Il to know what our military capabilities are, and to know we are willing to use them—which is why he believes that the "bleeding hearts" who say "Oh, God, we couldn't do this" about a war with North Korea (because of the threat to Seoul) interfere with our deterrent message to Kim. Kim needs to know that if he sells nuclear technology to terrorists, "he will get nuclear weapons on North Korea."

Ken Adelman seemed less willing than any of the other participants to contemplate pre-emptive war with Pyongyang. But he remained unwilling to put much stock in negotiations of any kind, and continued to rest his hopes on the Chinese. He thought the North Korean situation was so intractable that it needed an unconventional approach to shake it loose; the analogy he used was the way Ronald Reagan shook loose the arms-control debate in the 1980s by conceiving of "Star Wars" missile defense. For Adelman the most surprising thing about the war game was that

the debate didn't come down to a typical right-left divide. He noted in particular that he had been surprised to find himself to the left of Robert Gallucci in terms of willingness to use force.

Gallucci, for his part, said he was "surprised at how surprised Adelman was that we—those of us who favor negotiation—could end up in a position where we would favor the use of military force." Gallucci was emphatic that we urgently have to try to negotiate, as a prelude to possible military action, and was frustrated that the Bush administration and some of the war-game principals were unwilling to recognize that. To put his frustration in context, he told me a story.

"When I came back with the Agreed Framework deal and tried to sell it," he said, "I ran into the same people sitting around that table—the general to my right, Ken across from me. They hated the idea of trying to solve this problem with a negotiation.

"And I said, 'What's your—pardon me—your fucking plan, then, if you don't like this?'

"We don't like—"

"I said, 'Don't tell me what you don't like! Tell me how you're going to stop the North Korean nuclear program.'

"But we wouldn't do it this way—"

"Stop! What are you going to do?"

"I could never get a goddamn answer. What I got was 'We wouldn't negotiate.'"

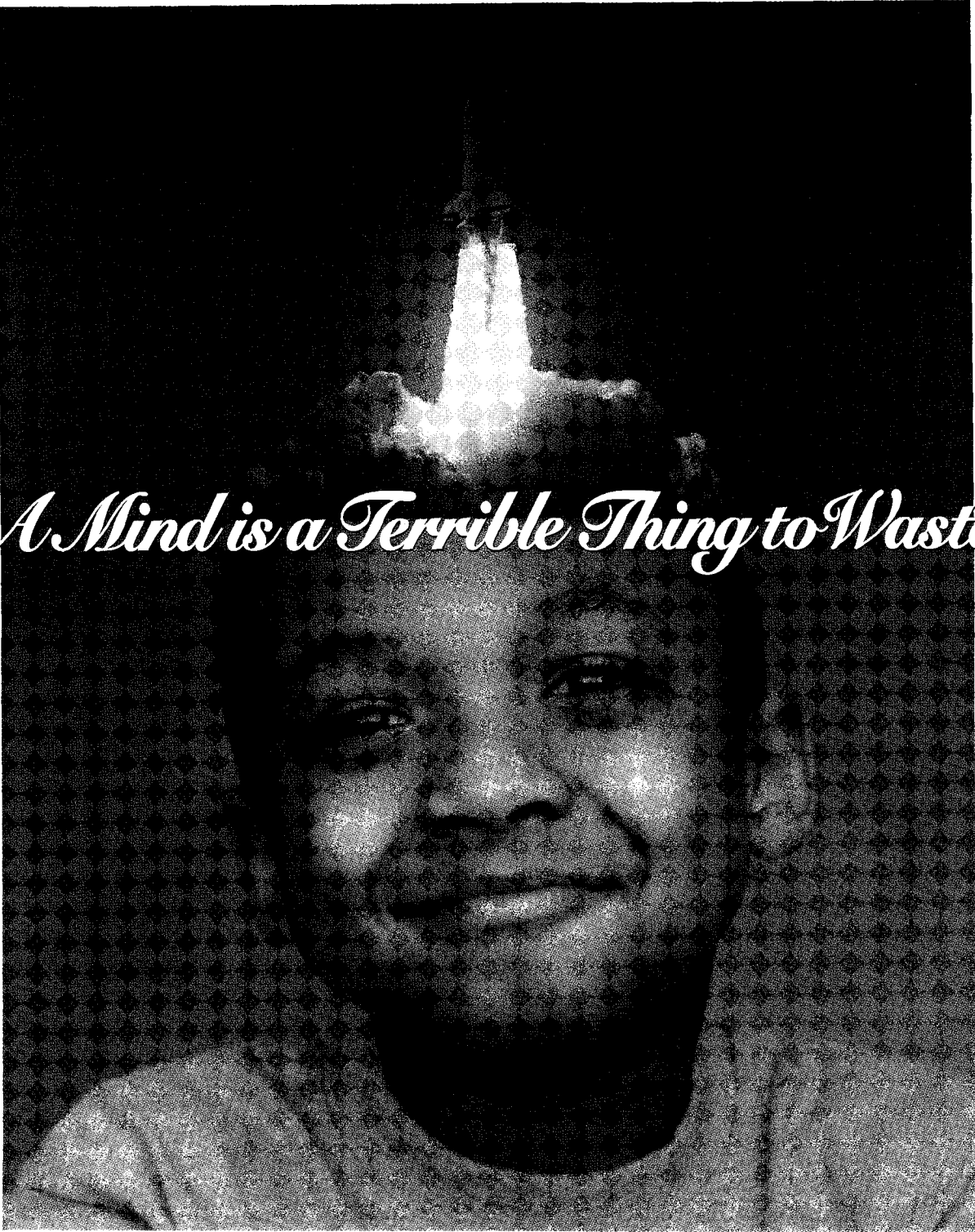
I pointed out that the North Koreans had—as McNerney emphasized—cheated on the 1994 agreement. "Excuse me," Gallucci said, "the Soviets cheated on virtually every deal we ever made with them, but we were still better off with the deal than without it."

To people who say that negotiating with the North Koreans rewards bad behavior, Gallucci says, "Listen, I'm not interested in teaching other people lessons. I'm interested in the national security of the United States. If that's what you're interested in, are you better off with this deal or without it? You tell me what you're going to do *without* the deal, and I'll compare that with the deal."

He was adamant that we were better off under the Agreed Framework—cheating and all—than we are now. "When the Clinton folks went out of office, the North Koreans only had the plutonium they had separated in the previous Bush administration. Now they've got a whole lot more. What did all this 'tough' shit give us? It gave us a much more capable North Korea. Terrific!"

For his part, Sam Gardiner came away with one overriding message. "I left the game with a firm conviction that the United States is focusing on the wrong problem," he told me. "Iran is down the road. Korea is now, and growing. We can't wait to deal with Korea." The president needs to engage the North Korean question for a very simple reason: "The military situation on the peninsula," he said, "is not under control." ■

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WOLFOWITZ: THE EXIT INTERVIEWS

As he prepared to leave office, the deputy secretary of defense engaged in a series of conversations with the author on Iraq, democracy, 9/11, and how he believes America must make its way in the world

BY MARK BOWDEN

Illustration by John Cuneo

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Those who deplore America's invasion of Iraq have no shortage of official villains, but to them perhaps none is more diabolical than Paul Wolfowitz, the deputy secretary of defense, who, in a promotion that vexes his detractors, will soon take over leadership of the World Bank. His name alone suggests sharp teeth and a thirst for the kill. Even in the hawkish administration of President George W. Bush there was no more forceful proponent for the war that toppled Saddam Hussein.

Last fall Wolfowitz agreed to a series of private and wide-ranging interviews about his tenure at the Pentagon. My conversations with him took place during four meetings over six months. Wolfowitz's office is large, its pale-blue walls hung with landscape paintings and one big photograph of "P-Dubs" (as he is sometimes known at the Pentagon) holding the hand of a small Iraqi boy during a visit to the war zone. Cynics may doubt America's motives in Iraq, but Wolfowitz appears well-intended: he is a proud liberator. The anteroom and office are decorated with reminders of power: flags, patriotic emblems, photographs of the Deposing with President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and others. The view from behind his desk looks out on the gray Potomac River and beyond, to the grand landmarks of the capital.

Whatever history's ultimate verdict on Wolfowitz, he works hard at his job. Famous for his long hours in the office, where he requires two shifts of staff members to keep pace, he has the year-round ghostly pallor of the work-addicted, accentuated by the graying of his defiantly unruly mop of straight hair (ridiculed by the antiwar filmmaker Michael Moore, who captured him trying to tame it with a comb and some spittle before a public appearance). There is nothing bellicose in Wolfowitz's manner; on the contrary, he is gentle and professorial—he was once the dean of the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, at Johns Hopkins—and speaks so

softly that at times I had to lean closer to catch his words. He frequently interjects "I might be wrong" before delivering an opinion. And while he can be persuasive, no one would ever accuse him of being smooth. He is genuine, unguarded, and above all preoccupied. He seems always at some remove and has an endearing awkwardness; he will stride across a room to shake one's hand and then just stand there, smiling earnestly. Unless some effort is made to engage him, he drifts off—even if he hasn't physically moved. That distance evaporates when one asks him a question—and rather than giving tidy, guarded, prepackaged summaries of his thinking, he steps right onto the careening raft of his consciousness.

At the core of Wolfowitz's view of the ongoing struggle in Iraq is the conviction that the tenacious enemy there consists primarily of organized remnants of Saddam's old regime. Critics of the American effort tend to see the Iraqi resistance as a broad-based popular one motivated by nationalism and anti-Americanism, and spearheaded by *jihadis*. If they are right, then the invasion of Iraq may simply have stirred up an ongoing civil war in that country, and could lead to the formation of a fundamentalist Islamic government that—allied with neighboring Iran—could serve as precisely the kind of haven for Islamist terrorists that the United States had hoped to destroy, one perhaps worse for America than Saddam Hussein's old regime. If Wolfowitz is right, then the insurgency consists of a relatively small number of brutal Saddamite thugs whose only popular support is based on fear. In his view, this core group, which he likens to the mafia, can be defeated, and Iraq in the near future will be a stable and self-governing ally in the region.

His conviction is partly a leap of faith. He likes to tell the story of a conference in Washington where a critic of America's foreign policy stood up to denounce the arrogance of imposing "our" democratic values on the Arab world, only to have an Arab stand up to

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complain that true arrogance was to assume such values were “ours,” when they are universal. Underlying his faith about Iraq is the belief that mankind everywhere seeks freedom and self-government. If there were no polls or even anecdotal evidence to support the view, Wolfowitz would still believe that that is what a majority of Iraqis want, and that those who would restore dictatorship or impose religious extremism are, by definition, a minority. Democracy, in his view, is both a universal ideal and a universal default position. When a Polish interviewer suggested that his policy was about “exporting democracy,” Wolfowitz objected. “Export of democracy isn’t really a good phrase,” he said. “We’re trying to remove the shackles on democracy.”

My aim in talking with Wolfowitz was not to debate policy or to second-guess decisions but to elicit a fuller explanation of his thinking.

SEPTEMBER 15, 2004

By almost any measure the war appeared to be going badly. Nearly sixteen months after President Bush had dramatically declared victory, Iraq was still a bloody battleground. Americans were hunkered down behind concrete barriers and barbed wire. A string of kidnappings and gruesome videotaped beheadings had horrified most of the world and inspired *ihadis* and die-hard Saddamites. A number of small Iraqi cities and towns—most notably Fallujah, scene of the murder and mutilation of American contract workers months earlier—were under the control of insurgents. Fallujah had effectively been ceded to the insurgency in April, when the newly formed Iraqi forces sent to reclaim it had allied themselves with the rebels. About fifty Americans had already died in Iraq that month, and sixty-six had been killed the month before. At home a report prepared for the CIA—and leaked—concluded that Saddam Hussein had no weapons of mass destruction, although he did have the means to manufacture them, and would probably have done so if UN sanctions had been lifted—a step the UN was considering prior to the invasion. On this very day Kofi Annan, the UN secretary general, would tell the BBC that the U.S. invasion was unjustified and “illegal,” and that conditions in Iraq were unsuitable for the elections scheduled for just four months hence.

Wolfowitz made no effort to paint a rosier picture. He seemed both concerned and determined. Not all the news was bad. A combined force of U.S. and Iraqi soldiers had partially retaken Samarra, a small city under insurgent control, and the intervention of Iraq’s Shia spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Sistani, had persuaded the forces of the rebel cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to lay down their arms in Najaf and “Sadr City,” an enclave in Baghdad. A national assembly had been chosen to oversee the interim government of Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, and the Occupation Authority (whose very existence Wolfowitz had opposed) had been dismantled. I asked him what was now the most pressing matter in Iraq.

“Concretely, it’s what do you do about Fallujah,” he said without hesitation. “When do you do it? Is the success that is being reported through our military channels in Samarra real, or is it another Fallujah? Is what I think was a success in Najaf being followed up aggressively enough against the Sadr people elsewhere? What should we be doing about Syria, which I think is very actively promoting trouble in Iraq, perhaps even to the point of shipping young Lebanese suicide volunteers to Iraq?”

Wolfowitz spoke in detail about military actions in certain Iraqi towns that had proved encouraging, particularly the routing—“at least for the time being”—of insurgent forces in Nineveh.

“I’m feeling good about that action,” he said. “And then, alongside it, two major developments are under way. One is the training of Iraqi security forces, which finally seems to have some real momentum, as of a couple of months ago. I have less confidence in the political process leading toward elections in January. It’s easier to sort of track the training schedule for battalions and equipment coming in and so forth. You can kind of see that concretely. What’s actually going to happen in the elections, I guess, is much less clear.”

Wolfowitz said he was concerned about reports, primarily in the American press, that the Baath Party, Saddam Hussein’s political organization, was set to make a comeback, to “re-emerge openly.” Despite its very public successes, the insurgency remained mysterious. Was it a loose collection of popularly supported cells following the lead of al-Qaeda, and thus part of the general anti-American, Islamo-fascist movement in the region? Or was it a remnant of the old tyranny, tightly run and centrally organized and funded? As noted, those who believe that the war cannot end well tend toward the former view. Those fighting the war are convinced—as is Wolfowitz—that it is mostly the latter.

“I admit to a prejudice here that we consistently underestimate the ability of the old apparatus to terrorize people,” he said. “I had a bit of an argument this afternoon with a former colleague who thinks we are kidding ourselves because we’re underestimating the extent to which the opposition is something new, and sort of genuine nationalist anti-Americanism. You could argue which is better news or which is worse news. There are problems in both. And there is a certain mixture. There is no question, I think, that as time has gone on, more people have become either disillusioned with us or maybe doubtful whether we are going to win. Therefore, some people who are not so hard-core about this are more susceptible to being pushed to do things. But there is an organization to this war. Quite a bit of organization. It’s loose, but it’s there. And unless you think there are several organizations, and the Baathists have suddenly picked up some non-Baathist allies, I don’t see it as spontaneous anger at Americans. I mean, to the contrary: just look at the hundreds of people, thousands of people, volunteering to join the national guard and the police force.

“And so even though it looks as if the situation keeps getting worse, week after week, at the same time it may be that the forces that are going to turn it around—as I believe—are getting stronger also, and there is a turning point coming. But the trend is admittedly bad.

“It was my own view before the war that we ought to go in and establish an Iraqi provisional government the day we got there. Nobody agreed with that. And maybe they were right. It’s not black and white. But some people were against it because they said it would be a government of ‘externals.’ It refers to Iraqis who were in exile in northern Iraq, outside of Saddam’s control. You can’t call them all exiles, because you can’t call Jalal Talabani [the Kurdish leader who is currently the president of Iraq] and Masoud Barzani [the current leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party] exiles. They’ve been in Iraq all this time. So you call them externals. So we took fourteen months, and we came up with a prime minister who is an external, a president who is an external, a deputy prime minister who is an external, two deputy vice presidents who are externals, and a cabinet which I think, if you look at it, would be seventy-five to eighty percent externals. I think it was a nutty idea from the beginning. It sort of had ingrained in it the notion that those who ran away were cowards, didn’t suffer. A lot of them who ran away ran because they were suffering even more than others.

“Once we accepted the label of being an occupation authority, it hurt us. It was debated among the lawyers, and ultimately we were told this was the international legal framework. I didn’t like it. Just the word ‘occupation,’ I think, has allowed al-Jazeera to draw a parallel with the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. The original plan was to continue the occupation until next year, when there would be an elected constitutional government. I just think that would have been crazy. So finally, last fall, with Rumsfeld’s push, we embraced the idea of accelerating the transfer to sovereignty. I think you can see from Iraq’s reaction to it what a hit it is. Even with all its limitations. The main limitation is people saying okay, you transferred sovereignty, but the security situation hasn’t gotten any better. Well, that’s where we lost time.

“The other place is on the issue of training Iraqi security forces. That gap is being filled now.”

“Given some of the things you said and wrote prior to going into Iraq,” I asked, “would it be safe to say you underestimated the difficulty of dealing with the country after Saddam fell?”

Wolfowitz replied that criticism of the administration’s postwar planning by and large ignored the difficulty of contending with a stubborn enemy.

“I think most people underestimated how tough these bastards are. I would say—and maybe it’s more than just defending myself—we fought very hard before the war to get free Iraqi forces trained in order to have reliable

security forces after the war was over. Others believed that wasn’t important, because after the war the regime would be gone and we wouldn’t need security forces. There was also a bit of a split. Our case was: After it’s over, you’re going to need some reliable people, because the institutions are rotten to the core. We also had report after report of Iraqi brigade-division commanders who were promising to bring their units over to our side. I don’t think there was a single such event that actually took place. I remember Rumsfeld saying at the time, “That’s what they’re telling you; in the meantime, they’re telling Saddam the opposite.” It’s quite clear that from day one there was never any intention among the five thousand or ten thousand or fifteen thousand hard-core to do anything but continue fighting us. Saddam didn’t leave Baghdad declaring surrender. He left Baghdad saying “We are going to continue to fight, and we are going to continue funding resistance up until December.” He still calls himself the president of Iraq. His cronies still have hundreds of millions of dollars, we think, in bank accounts in Syria and Lebanon and maybe in Jordan. It’s as though the Nazis after their defeat still controlled Nuremberg, and had bank accounts in Switzerland and sanctuary in Switzerland and some cooperation from another country like Iran.”

“Once we accepted the label of being an occupation authority, it hurt us. I didn’t like it. Just the word ‘occupation’ has allowed al-Jazeera to draw a parallel with the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.”

Wolfowitz paused, reflecting on my original question, cupping both hands around his coffee mug, and then resumed.

“Sorry, it’s a long answer. But what I really think is, the heart of the problem is that thirty-five years of raping and murdering and torturing in that country created a hard core that is incredibly brutal and a population that is incredibly scared—a population that is relatively easy to intimidate. And by and large we didn’t deal rigorously enough with the possible tools at our disposal. As someone put it to me in Iraq, the blacklist should have been more than fifty-five people. It should have been more like five thousand. On the other hand, people who weren’t on that blacklist should have been brought into the fold more readily.”

“You were one of those who was most emphatic prior to going into Iraq that Saddam had stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.”

“I don’t think so.”

“I can quote you.”

"Okay."

I read him a line from an op-ed article under his byline in the British newspaper *The Independent* for January 30, 2003: "There is incontrovertible evidence that the Iraqi regime still possesses such weapons." Wolfowitz had spoken in the same terms on numerous occasions.

"'Incontrovertible evidence' is a pretty strong way of putting it," I said. "How did you feel when you found out they didn't have such weapons?"

"Well, I don't think they don't," he said. "You say it turned out they didn't. By the way, read me the quote again."

I did so. Wolfowitz said he needed to go back and review his prior statements.

"But clearly you believed they had stockpiles of such weapons?"

"You are putting the word 'stockpiles' in," he said.

He was right: "stockpiles" was my word.

"See, that's what—I wasn't convinced about stockpiles. I always thought the nuclear thing was overstated. That was down the road. What really bothered me was biological weapons, and we know they made them. We know they know how to make them. We know there was a lot of deliberate effort to destroy evidence of all kinds of things. 'Incontrovertible,' I agree, is a pretty strong word. But we know they've had the stuff and—let me put it this way—they were given a chance to come clean under [UN Resolution] 1441, to declare everything they had and to cooperate fully with inspectors. We caught them lying on the declarations on not insignificant things—mostly on the missiles they were working on and the UAVs [unmanned aerial vehicles] they were working on. And there was lots of evidence of obstructing inspectors and moving things and hiding things. That was supposed to be the test of 1441—not whether we could prove they had stockpiles."

"Well, absent the threat of weapons like these, should the United States have gone to war against Iraq or Saddam Hussein?"

"You had a very dangerous character who played with terrorists, who had regularly declared hostile intentions toward us and toward our allies in the Persian Gulf, who definitely had a capacity to make these weapons and—absent some kind of fairly fundamental change in his attitude and policy—was extremely dangerous, and much more dangerous in the light of September 11 than before. And that's where September 11 changed the calculation. I think it would have been irresponsible to leave him alone. If he had fully complied with the UN resolutions, wouldn't we still have a problem with him? He could still be supporting terrorism. He certainly would still be mistreating his own people. Compliance would have represented a major change on Saddam's part. But he didn't comply."

As for pushing ahead without the support of France and other major European allies, Wolfowitz was dismissive.

"I'm not sure what we would have been waiting for. I think the notion that if we waited longer we would have had a unified international community and we would have been able to act—number one, that's very dubious. And number two, our problems in Iraq don't stem from the fact that the French didn't join us. I don't think so."

As our conversation ended that day, I came back to a comment he had made earlier in passing. He had mentioned the possibility of failure.

"What would failure in Iraq look like?"

"I'm not sure it helps thinking about it," he said, "other than to realize that you've got to do everything to prevent it. I think it's preventable."

"But what would it look like? Are we talking about anarchy, or civil war, or a new dictatorship?"

Wolfowitz dodged the question. He was not prepared to speculate on the possibility of failure.

"One reason I don't think we will fail is because all the enemy has is its ability to terrorize," he said. "It doesn't promise people a better life. Does it appeal to Iraqi nationalism? It certainly doesn't appeal to Shiite or Kurdish views of the Iraq they want to see. I don't think it appeals to most Sunnis. So we have superior force, we've got resources and a lot of money, which is slowly making a difference. But that alone isn't enough. At the core what we have is legitimacy. I don't mean we as Americans, but this effort has legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqi people as a whole."

"What if America's patience and toleration are exhausted?"

"The American people are pretty impressive in their ability to keep after something if they think it is doable," he said. "I think what they don't want to hear is that all this is for something that can't be done."

OCTOBER 28, 2004

It was just over a week before the election. There had been another terribly bloody month in Iraq, including more videotaped beheadings and the slaughter of forty-nine young Iraqis who had been recruited for the country's new army. Muqtada al-Sadr's forces had negotiated an agreement and begun turning over their rifles (he proved a manageable problem, as Wolfowitz had predicted), but the city of Fallujah was still insurgent-controlled, and the wave of bombings and kidnappings throughout the country created an impression of hopelessness. Wolfowitz showed no concern that President Bush (and thus he himself) would be turned out of office. He seemed to appreciate better than most of his countrymen that no matter who won the election, the problem he was handling was not going to change or go away.

"I want to ask you this question before Election Day," I said. "What would, or could, a different administration do differently in Iraq?"

"I think we're on the right approach now," he said. "So

I can imagine a different approach, but I can't imagine it working."

"What would the different approach be?"

"Flooding Iraq with American troops, although I don't think they're going to do that. Pulling out, or partially pulling out. Kind of saying to the Iraqis, 'Okay, it's put-up-or-shut-up time now. You're on your own.' In a way we're doing that now, but we're trying to do that on a controlled schedule. To use one of Rumsfeld's favorite metaphors, we're raising the training wheels on the bicycle rather than removing them completely. I guess the other thing is—and I think they're just beating their gums on this—suppose suddenly the French say, 'We'll give you all five thousand French troops that are deployable.' But the French are stretched beyond their capacity already, so maybe they'd hire Pakistanis. I don't know where they'd come from."

Wolfowitz was less focused on the U.S. election than on the Iraqi ones scheduled for January. Around the world critics of administration policy were arguing that the elections ought to be delayed, that the level of violence and intimidation in Iraq made holding fair elections impossible. Wolfowitz saw the ballot as the most formidable weapon against the insurgency.

"The insurgents are really anxious to prevent the elections from happening," he said. "It is interesting to note that the election in Afghanistan was just an enormous strategic defeat for the Taliban. They can see the same thing happening in Iraq. If there really is a popular elected government, that means they'll be fighting Iraqis, not Americans, and that's already a problem for them. Polling shows a roughly ten-percentage-point increase in popular criticism of the enemy because of things like killing schoolchildren, beheadings, and the general violence. Of course, the purpose of that violence isn't to get people to love them; it's to get people to fear them. This is an intense period both politically and in terms of security. Secondly, I think the situation is one where both sides are getting stronger. I mean, I've been trying to figure out how does one square a certain level of real optimism on the part of our commanders with the fact that in many measurable figures of security, things seem to be getting worse. The answer is that our forces on the ground see the Iraqis getting stronger, gaining ground, and eventually overtaking the enemy. I think it's like a footrace where the enemy got a head start, but they're basically weaker in numbers, popular support, and lots of other things. The Iraqi side is going to catch up and overtake them. I say 'Iraqi side,' but that's one of the things that is not so clear right now. What is the Iraqi side? Is it Ayad Allawi? Is it somebody else? How strong is Allawi personally? It's hard to know those things. But just the sheer number of people who are volunteering for the national guard and the police in the face of unbelievable efforts to intimidate them is very impressive."

Estimates of the size of the insurgency were, in his opinion, just guesses.

"It's big, but it's a tiny fraction of the country," he said. "It's even a tiny fraction of the Sunni Arab population. But it's enough to scare the shit out of everybody if two hundred of them are living in your city. And if the two hundred are able to pay a thousand unemployed kids to plant bombs and shoot RPGs [rocket-propelled grenades] ... I don't know of another guerrilla war in which killing for hire has been *the* principal enemy tactic, apart from suicide bombers."

The administration had initially estimated the number of insurgents at 5,000, and more recently at as many as 20,000. The growing estimate had become a political issue, because it suggested that support for the insurgency was spreading. Wolfowitz believed the opposite was true.

On the insurgency: "It's big, but it's a tiny fraction of the country. It's even a tiny fraction of the Sunni Arab population. But it's enough to scare the shit out of everybody if two hundred of them are living in your city."

"The implication is, I think, that it's metastasized, kind of like a cancer, and that they're proliferating," he said. "I don't think that is the model. One of the most fundamental challenges is understanding what the problem is. You can't win if you're chasing the wrong problem." This is what he felt many of the war's critics were doing—evaluating the game as though only one team were on the field. Every setback to the home team was caused not by a clever counter-strike by a determined enemy but by a failure of planning or execution—as though a perfect policy were possible. In retrospect, he said, it's clear that mistakes were made in preparing for and handling the postwar phase, but they were not the ones most frequently mentioned.

"What I think would have made a difference is: number one, training more Iraqis before the war," he said. "Other people said, 'We don't need trained Iraqis.' We ended up with seventy-two as a result in this training program. Second thing would have been to have an Iraqi government recognized from the onset, and we lost that; but the opposing view stemmed from the belief that we could control the country for a much longer period of time. I thought the model of what happened in northern Iraq in 1991 was a model worth trying to emulate. Recognizing northern Iraq was a lot simpler. And the third thing, I think, was that we didn't go after the bad guys in a properly focused way. The usual criticism is that de-Baathification was too harsh, and there's some truth to that. But the other criticism, which isn't made enough, is that we were nowhere near as tough as we should have been on the really hard-core."

The most frequent criticisms of the administration's Iraq policy were that the war should not have been pursued without a UN resolution and without troops from more nations; that there should have been more allied soldiers on the ground in Iraq to control the country after the initial victory; that the administration ignored State Department advice about postwar planning; and that the Iraqi army and police should not have been disbanded.

"People start by deciding what is a mistake that we made," Wolfowitz said. "It's based on their desire to say 'I told you so,' or 'We were right.' So you start from 'The mistake was not enough troops,' or 'The mistake was not enough UN resolutions,' or 'The mistake was not enough State Department people,' or 'The mistake was not enough electricity.' And if that's the mistake, then you analyze from the mistake to who's at fault.

"I can go through the list. Most of the things that are suggested as mistakes didn't happen at all. The notion that we didn't pay attention to the State Department plan—that's baloney. The notion that we didn't have the State Department play a role—there were many of them! There were at least ten ambassadors or former ambassadors, including Bremer himself and his two deputies; and the governance team, which played the key advisory role in the political process, was directed by a State Department official and had many State officers on the staff—and they did a good job. The State Department itself opposed the recommendation of the Future of Iraq Project to recognize a provisional Iraqi government from day one. Then there are the allegations that we didn't flood the place with troops, and we disbanded the Iraqi army. On the not-enough-troops issue, no one has made a convincing case about how having more troops would have gotten at the insurgency or the enemy better. The problem was recognizing who the enemy was and having actionable intelligence to find them. But if you have more troops, that creates a new set of problems. You have a heavier American footprint, which means alienating more people. And without better intelligence you can't do anything with more troops.

"The other 'mistake' was supposedly disbanding the Iraqi army, and that's a mixed bag. Look what happened with the Fallujah Brigade [the Iraqi force that essentially went over to the insurgents]. So keeping their army intact certainly wasn't a panacea, and it had a lot of problems built into it.

"Almost no one says the real problem is that Saddam never surrendered. And even though he was captured, his people never surrendered. His organization is still operating as though they have a chance to win, and they're allied with people who want to help them win—by which I mean the *jihadis* on the one side and the Syrian Baathists on the other—even though the minute they triumphed they would start fighting with each other over the spoils. I think we're even seeing signs that the Syrian Baathists and the Iraqi Baathists are getting back together temporarily. They all want to see us lose, and that's more important to them than

who comes out on top. But if you don't see who the enemy is and why they're fighting, you can't win. The fact is that they've been fighting this way since the beginning of the war—in fact, they've been fighting this way for thirty-five years. You're dealing with cellular structures that were the way Saddam ruled and terrorized the place from the beginning. The model is closer to John Gotti than any other model we know, except it's on a national scale."

NOVEMBER 19, 2004

The big news at home was that President Bush had won re-election. There were rumors all over Washington about what job Wolfowitz would get in the cabinet shake-up. I saw him for just a short time, and found him unchanged—still as troubled and preoccupied by the hard challenge of Iraq as when we had first met. The good news from that country was that an American assault had succeeded in taking Fallujah, but large portions of the city had been leveled. Insurgent attacks had not decreased. There had been yet more videotaped beheadings. Margaret Hassan, the director of CARE International in Iraq, had been killed by insurgents who had kidnapped her weeks earlier. On the first day of the month the deputy governor of Baghdad had been assassinated, along with two of his bodyguards. With Iraqi elections scheduled in just over two months, the picture was still bleak.

I asked Wolfowitz about the retaking of Fallujah. Military commanders in Iraq had declared that day that the city was completely under American control.

"The purpose of the operation, in my view, was not primarily to kill and capture the people we killed and captured, although that's a gain, but to take away sanctuary, to not give them places where they can freely build hundreds of IEDs [improvised explosive devices], and to deprive them of a place to run away to after a fight. And also to discourage them from thinking they can set up a sanctuary somewhere else. I think the psychological effect of Fallujah is pretty large. This victory reverses that. You can't measure the strategic impact of this victory just from the fact it was a tactical success. Also we'll see over the next few months what impact it has on the psychology of people to realize that the Americans are here to stay, that George Bush has been re-elected, and that Fallujah's not a sanctuary anymore. I think it's part of a package of convincing folks that our victory is inevitable. But of course part of the issue here, too, is to transfer 'our' from meaning 'the Americans' to meaning 'the Iraqis.' And one of the successes in Fallujah is that we managed to maintain a great deal of basically almost perfect coordination and closeness with the Iraqi government. If you remember, what stopped the operation last April was all of them were threatening to leave the governing council, including Allawi, and Lakhdar Brahimi [the UN special envoy charged with forming the Iraqi interim government] was threatening to end the UN role. One might

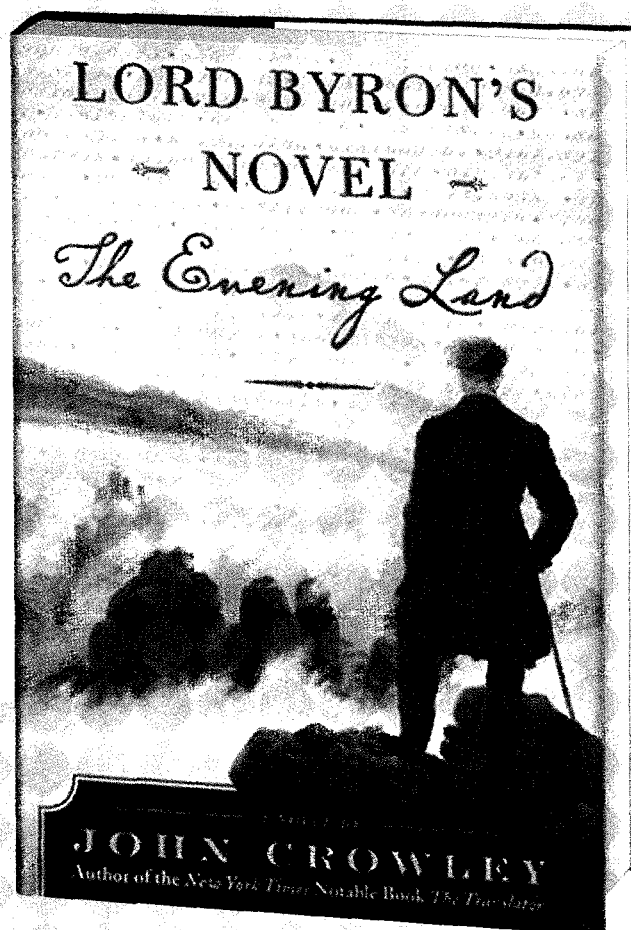
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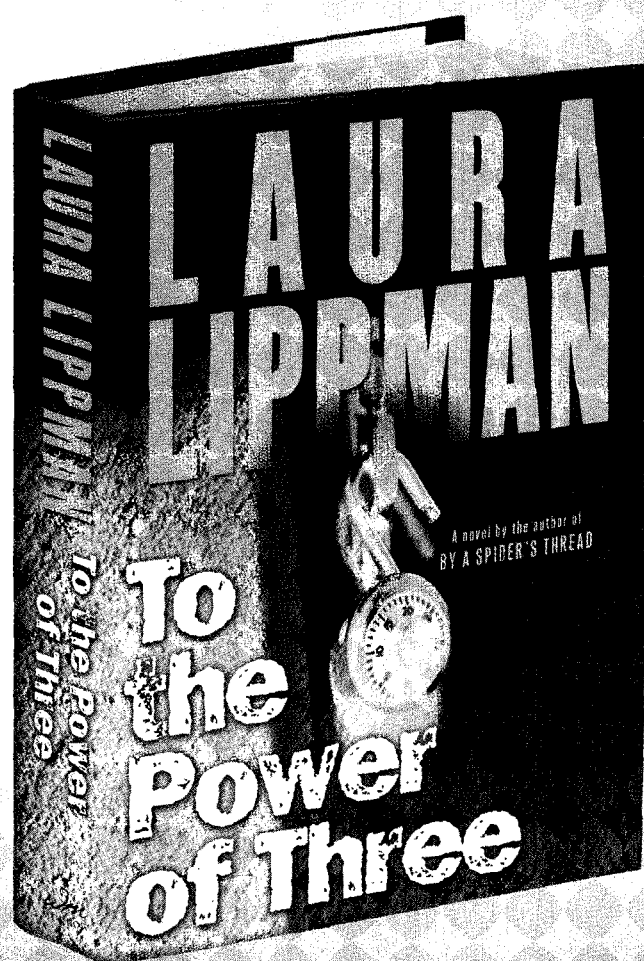
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wm

WILLIAM MORROW

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have toughed it out, but it was a very close call, and it may have been reasonable judgment to say the politics of this are more important. This time we went into it, we said to these guys, 'If we start it, we have to finish it, and you have to be with us.' And they were. And they were jittery, biting their fingernails. I'm not sure even yet if they believe it was a victory for them. But I think it is. There were relatively low civilian casualties, because the government gave people lots of time to get out of town."

"When we were talking last," I said, "you were saying you weren't sure that even the people fighting the war knew who it was they were fighting. Has that come into any clearer focus?"

"Substantially clearer," he said. "In the sense that CENTCOM seems to have a much clearer view. It's possible that it's clear but wrong. But they're actually now identifying the top thirty-four or thirty-five key financier-facilitator leaders of this operation, if you can call it an operation. One of the things that is elusive here is to what extent they are coordinated. I don't think anyone would say it is centrally controlled, top-down, Lenin-style, but I think you could make a case that it's a bunch of different groups that are reasonably closely coordinated and have reasonably common sources of funding."

Wolfowitz noted again that the financial roots of the insurgency reached to Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.

"You're dealing with cellular structures that were the way Saddam ruled and terrorized the place from the beginning. The model is closer to John Gotti than any other model we know, except it's on a national scale."

"One of Saddam's half brothers, Sabawi al-Tikrit, has been reported in Syria for well over a year. He's probably dived into funds. The Iraqis claim that Saddam's daughter in Jordan is helping to fund the insurgency. There was this conference in Lebanon that was basically an enemies' alternative conference to the Iraqi National Conference in Baghdad. It was actually public and it was a conference of the violent opposition, held under Syrian auspices because you don't have a conference in Beirut without the Syrians.

"Speculation on my part is they've been growing their organization basically by re-recruiting the old Baath Party guys and coming around and saying, 'Look, the Americans are flagging. Allawi is failing. We're going to win, and when we come back into power, we'll remember who was with us and who was against us.' There was even a press report a month or two ago, which had a lot of credibility for me, that

somebody had gone back to the Baath Party—it's not the party, it's the hard core—and had second thoughts about it, and when he tried to leave, he was killed and his body was dumped in the river. It's very mafia-like. I think it'd be interesting if we could find some real experts on attacking gangs and send them to Iraq to work on this operation. The gangs make the offer you can't refuse: either you accept a lot of money or they kill you. And they have figured out there are things worse than death."

The key to victory is bringing the leaders of this mafia-like organization to justice. Unfortunately, Wolfowitz noted, Iraq lacks a working criminal-justice system.

APRIL 4, 2005

At our last meeting Wolfowitz appeared far more cheerful and relaxed. Successful elections in Iraq had seemingly confirmed his belief that a majority of Iraqis were eager for democracy and opposed to the ongoing insurgency. The elected interim assembly in Iraq had just finished naming a government—something many skeptics had believed would never happen. Insurgent attacks and American deaths were at their lowest point since immediately after the fall of Baghdad. The American mission to create a stable democratic society in Iraq was every day becoming more and more an Iraqi mission. There was still a long way to go, and the possibility of failure was still very real, but it seemed a lot less likely than it had half a year before, when I first sat down with Wolfowitz.

If he felt vindicated, he didn't say so directly. He was cautiously optimistic. It was a moment suitable for moving on to the next challenge. He had just returned from Brussels, where he had been unanimously approved as the new head of the World Bank. Clearly excited about the powerful new position, he seemed relieved to be stepping away from his war role—not just to be free of the awful burden but to be distancing himself from the caricature of him as a carnivore in the Bush administration. The World Bank's mission of fighting poverty, he said, was perfectly in keeping with the philosophy that motivated America's war in Iraq: a happier world is a more secure world. "We are all better off when other people are better off," he said. The public's impressions notwithstanding, throughout his long career in government service he had been only a reluctant advocate of force. He said that even though he had pushed for a more aggressive American effort to topple Saddam—beginning in 1991, right after the Persian Gulf War—he had not advocated invading Iraq in order to accomplish that. His support for going to war came only after the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks.

"I changed my view after 9/11," he said. "Contrary to the myth that I have been waiting all along for an excuse to invade Iraq, before then I really didn't want to even think about sending in U.S. ground forces. I had always thought the idea of occupying Baghdad was both unnecessary and

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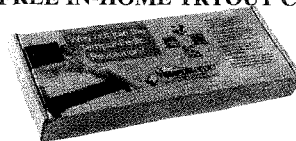
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a mistake. What was needed was to arm and train the Iraqis to do the job themselves—the way, in effect, the Afghans did, by taking advantage of the fact that a third of the country was already liberated. I advocated supporting them with air power if necessary. I remember congressional testimony where I think I may have used the phrase—maybe someone else did—‘reducing Saddam to the mayor of Baghdad,’ at which point he would collapse. It was sometimes called the enclave strategy, disparagingly, although I still don’t know what was wrong with it. I have a general strong bias in favor of empowering other people to liberate themselves rather than using American force to do it. I don’t like using American troops, and I believe the best alternative to using American troops is to get allies. And the best allies are people who are trying to liberate themselves. Part of what is wrong with the view of American imperialism is that it is antithetical to our interests. We are better off when people are governing themselves. I’m sure there is some guy that will tell you that philosophy is no different from the Roman Empire’s. Well, it is fundamentally different.”

“So how did 9/11 change your opinion?”

“What changed were two things. It was not principally the 9/11 attacks, it was the anthrax scares that came days later. That brought the awareness that it might be too dangerous to take this guy down slow-motion. Remember, we still don’t know who did those anthrax attacks, to this day.

“I still think [the Iraq War] was right. I’d advise it all over again if I had to. There is this notion that there is such a thing as perfect knowledge, and you wait to get it before you make a decision. There is no such thing.”

“I remember a conversation with the president at Camp David on September 15 during a coffee break, and the president said that the Iraq options prepared by the military didn’t offer very much. I agreed, and said that it would be very simple to enable the Iraqi opposition to take over the southern part of the country and protect it with American air power. That would have included a large chunk of Saddam’s oil revenues. And the president said, ‘That’s an imaginative idea; how come you didn’t say so?’ And I said, contrary to what is in Woodward’s book, ‘It is not my place to contradict the chairman of the joint chiefs unless the secretary of defense asks me to do so.’ In fact, I believe that in the directive—it is all coming back to me now—the president signed to Rumsfeld to put together a plan for Afghanistan, it specifically mentions the option of taking control of the southern part of Iraq in some form.”

“Isn’t the Iraq debate ultimately over the uses of power?” I asked.

“I see the debate differently,” Wolfowitz said. “I see it as a debate over the acceptability of the status quo—whether you go back to containment; living with the Soviet Union; living with Marcos, Korean dictators, Suharto; living with Saddam; or even today living with Iranians. There is a constant bias toward inaction, because the risks are less obvious.

“But you must also consider the costs of inaction. When people say Saddam was a bad guy, I immediately know what is going to follow: ‘So are a lot of other dictators.’ But Saddam was not just a bad guy. I feel like paraphrasing Lloyd Bentsen in the Dan Quayle debate: I knew Ferdinand Marcos, I knew Suharto, and neither dictator was a Saddam Hussein. There is such a world of difference between many dictators and the rare ones that torture children in order to make their parents talk. The point is, this has something to do, I think, with the morality of what we did. But it also has a lot to do with the nature of the enemy we are still fighting. The use of force to liberate people is very different from the use of force to suppress or control them, or even to defeat them. This gets back to the idea of America imposing its idea on other people. It doesn’t mean there is some simplistic course of taking on all dictators indiscriminately. It doesn’t mean you don’t do a deal with Qaddafi when there is something to do a deal on. It doesn’t mean you pull all the plugs on Mubarak. But you don’t take a complete pass when Egypt locks up a guy like Saad Ibrahim, who represents the desire for a civil society.”

“Since we last talked,” I said, “there were elections in Iraq—generally perceived, I think, as successful.”

“Dramatic,” Wolfowitz said.

“I always begin these conversations by asking you to assess where we are in Iraq. So where do you think we are now?”

“The two main tracks are self-government and self-defense, and Iraq has come a long way in the past six months on both tracks. Iraqi security forces are bigger, stronger, and generally performing much better. Is it uniformly wonderful? No. But I think it’s a very clear upward path. There are real splits in the so-called insurgencies now. The election must have created a certain sense of inevitability, if eight and a half million people would vote in spite of being threatened not to vote. If you see that the overwhelming majority of your countrymen are ready to risk their lives to win this thing, and that one or two hundred thousand of them are training and getting armed and so forth, it has got to take away a lot of the enemy propaganda that we can just wait these people out. There is an Iraqi-American I know who said that on April 9, 2003, the Americans liberated Iraq, and on January 30, 2005, the Iraqis liberated Iraq. But I think every one of these victories has a certain half-life.”

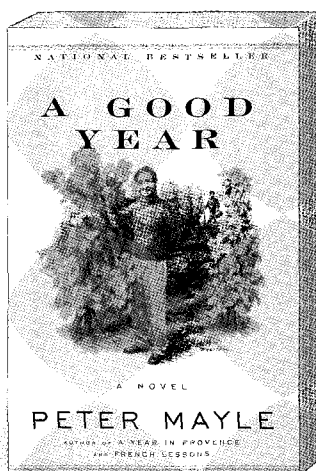
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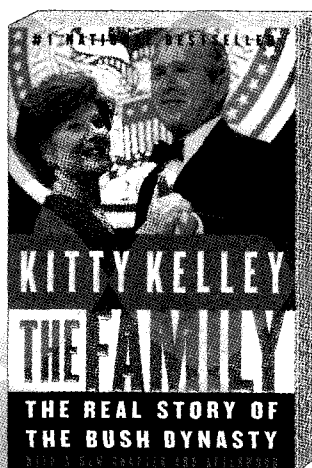
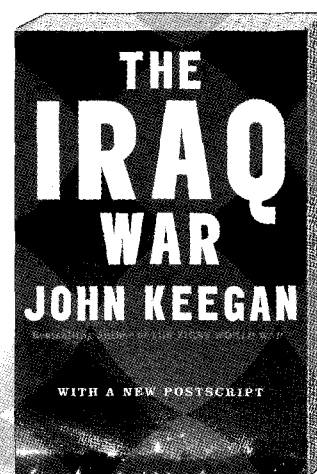
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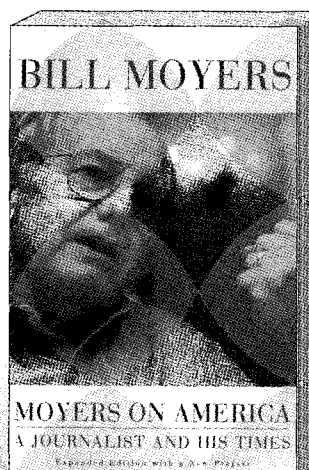
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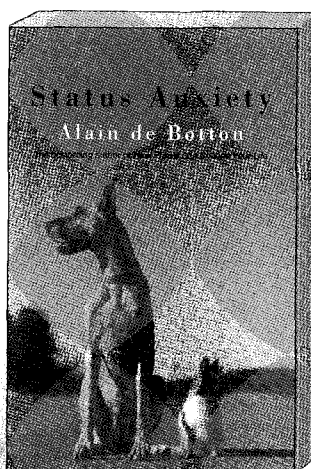
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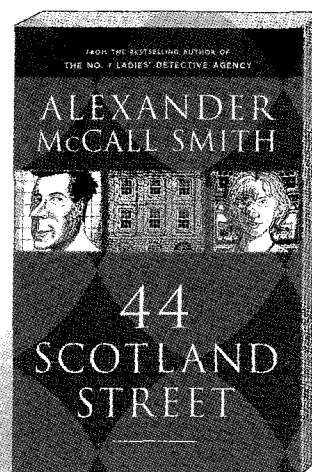
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racy," I asked, "or was it primarily tribal—the Shiites finally getting the chance to assert their majority status?"

"Well, that is not undemocratic," Wolfowitz said.

"When did you first get reports of what was happening?"

"I literally didn't want to stay up. Not because of the time change, but maybe it was sort of a statement of faith. I didn't want to stay up in suspense all night. I wanted to get some sleep."

"So you went to bed."

"There were some friends who were having a party, and when I got up in the morning I talked to them, and by that time it was clear the turnout was large. And I remember getting this very excited phone call from an Iraqi friend who said that he voted for the first time in his life.

"Each time something good has happened in Iraq, I have had this uncomfortable feeling. Like when Baghdad was liberated. I mean, I was excited, but I didn't think it was over. And I remember the same sort of feeling when Saddam was captured: this is great, but it is not over. The more everyone else is getting exhilarated, the more I get the feeling we will make the General Meade mistake of not following up on victories. [The U.S. Civil War general George Meade famously failed to pursue Confederate forces after the Union victory at Gettysburg, giving General Robert E. Lee a chance to regroup and fight on.] The big difference about the January 30 victory is that it's no longer in our hands, which I think is a good thing."

"In our first conversation, in September, I asked you what failure would look like in Iraq if it happened, and you declined to comment. Could you talk about that now? What would it look like if things failed in Iraq?"

"Well, I suppose if we pulled out prematurely, before the forces of a new Iraq get their act together, you could have the restoration of some kind of tyranny. It would have a very bloody form, I think, and in fact it might pull us back in all over again. It's hard to imagine us standing aside and watching that happen."

"So," I said, "the United States could end up just stuck in Iraq, with our forces targets for insurgent attacks, and with no credible Iraqi leadership?"

"I guess that would be one possibility," Wolfowitz replied. "But we are not going to pull out prematurely, and the elections have helped convince Iraqis of that. If some kind of constitutional government gets established in Iraq, if the insurgency is defeated and Iraq gets on its feet, then I think it's a huge gain for us in the Arab world and in the overall war on terrorism. It's such an imperfect analogy, but I still think of the analogy of Germany and Japan being basket cases for several years after World War II and then becoming pillars of our own foreign policy. South Korea being a basket case for much longer, and now an independent, self-supporting country that contributes hugely. The new democracies in Eastern Europe. I think we just get stronger when these new countries emerge that

share our values, more or less. That doesn't mean they are carbon copies. That certainly doesn't mean we have no differences with them. But overall, it's a much better world for us as a result. I think that after 9/11 the importance of beginning to push that kind of change in the Muslim world is huge."

"Since you are going to be leaving your position and heading on after this tumultuous four or five years," I said, "how certain do you feel when you make these decisions?"

"Fortunately, I don't have to make the decisions," Wolfowitz replied. "I give advice to people who do."

"But how certain do you feel that you are right?"

"I think someone once said that decision-making is usually trying to choose the least crappy of the various alternatives. It does seem to me that so many things we have to decide are fifty-five-forty-five decisions, or sixty-forty decisions. Arrogance is one of the worst failings in a senior decision-maker. I really admire people like President Bush and Harry Truman, who were good at it. Dean Acheson said about Truman that he was free of that most crippling of emotions, regret. Once he made a decision, he moved on. And I think that's what characterizes really good decision-makers. I think this president is one. He accepts the fact that if he's batting six hundred, he's doing pretty well. I was in the Oval Office the day he signed the executive order to invade Iraq, and I know how painful that was. He actually went out in the Rose Garden just to be alone for a little while. It's hard to imagine how hard that was. And of course you can't be sure, maybe ten years from now or five years from now, how it will look. We still don't know how it will turn out, so you can't possibly be sure you were right.

"I still think it was right. I'd advise it all over again if I had to. There is this sort of intellectual notion that there is such a thing as perfect knowledge, and you wait to get perfect knowledge before you make a decision. In the first place, even if there were perfect knowledge, it would be too late by the time you got it. And secondly, there is no such thing. Accepting the imperfection of knowledge is a very important part of being a great decision-maker. I'm not. I understand the process intellectually, less so emotionally. I feel a lot more comfortable about any decision I make if I feel like I have thought through all the arguments—even if at the end of the day there is not a mathematical formula that tells you which one is right. But at least you won't discover a factor you hadn't even considered.

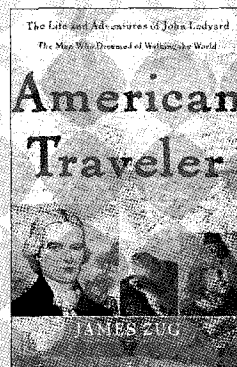
"A fundamental flaw in the 9/11 report, absolutely fundamental, is that it assumes that if we had had perfect intelligence, we could have prevented the attacks. Therefore what we need is perfect intelligence. Instead of recognizing that you'll never have perfect intelligence, which takes you down an entirely different policy route."

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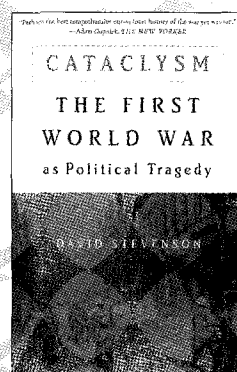
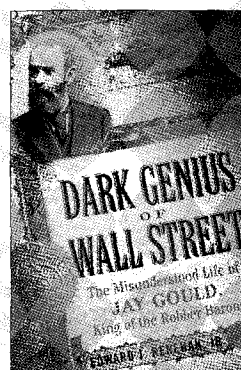


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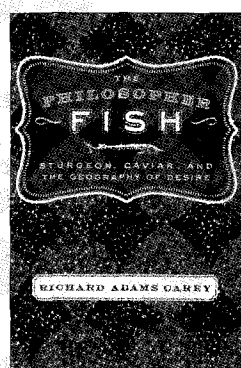
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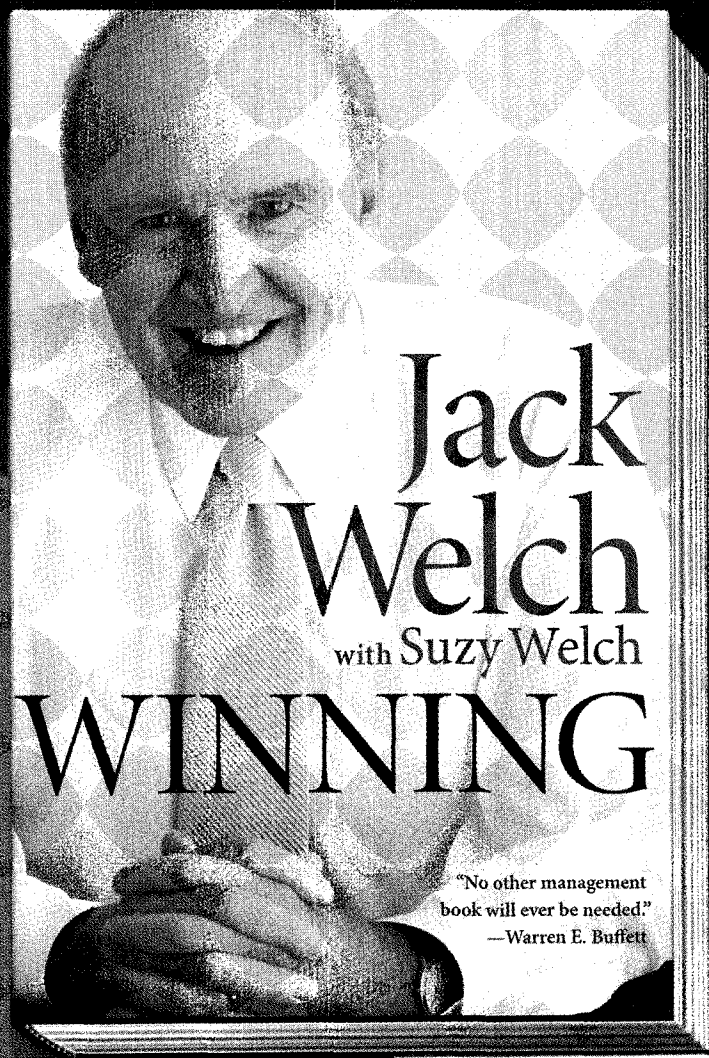
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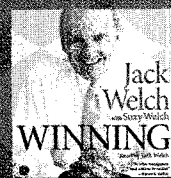
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BOOKS & CRITICS

JULY/AUGUST 2005 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY

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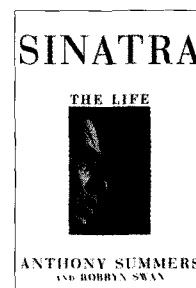
Elements of Style

What to read this month—and what not to

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

Here is a subject for a great American biography. Frank Sinatra is, along with Cary Grant, the most sublime American performing talent produced in the twentieth century. He utterly and permanently transformed American song; for three decades he was a central, and often driving, force in the entertainment industries—radio, gambling, records, and movies; he was both emblematic of and a vehicle for organized crime's reach into nearly every aspect of American public life; he was the single most important model of masculinity for two generations of Americans. The popular culture, politics, gender relations, and style (in every conceivable aspect) of the American century can't be fathomed without him. He was also an exquisitely complex personality. The public always knew the basic contradictions: Sinatra was vicious and sweet-hearted; he hated racial and religious bigotry and consorted with killers; he was a man of easy elegance and he was a lout. But while those paradoxes contributed to his mystique, they never defined it. Indeed, in what endures as the most adroitly drawn portrait, the 1966 *Esquire* article "Frank Sinatra Has a Cold," Gay Talese observed Sinatra as he awed, cowed, and beguiled his circle and those outside it, and revealed how Sinatra's bullying and charm and vulnerability shaded into one another, and so let readers discern Sinatra as a man, even as Talese made plain that Sinatra's charisma remained impenetrable. With quiet authority Pete Hamill's elegant 1998 meditation, *Why Sinatra Matters*, locates its subject in the wider social and cultural currents of his times, but Hamill maintains that Sinatra "matters" chiefly as an artist. And while his slim book is the smartest, most precise, and most moving assessment of Sinatra's music, especially his greatest work (the incomparable Capitol Records albums of his early mature years), it is by definition an incomplete picture (which is deeply unfortunate; no writer can navigate as nimbly through Sinatra's world of politicians, mobsters, immigrants, musicians, and starlets as Hamill, who knew Sinatra well—a fact that probably explains his reluctance to write a full biography).

Until now that has left the reading public with Kitty Kelly's sensational 1986 scandal sheet of a book, an unreliable but not necessarily



SINATRA
*by Anthony Summers
and Robbyn Swan*
Knopf

false work, though one devoid of insight. Regrettably, *Summers and Swan's* chronicle is a more or less tarted-up version of Kelly's. True, the authors employed a band of assiduous researchers, and they've mined the scant FBI and other government files now available. Their evidence suggests not merely that Sinatra palled around with and aided the Mafia (especially and most crucially in its relationship with John F. Kennedy) but that he was its creature. But here, as in so many other areas of Sinatra's life, the authors string together (often previously published) assertions, usually without corroborating evidence. The authors do confirm an already overwhelmingly persuasive picture of JFK as brutally coarse, doped up, and mobbed up (the survival of the Camelot myth is truly one of the world's incomprehensible mysteries), and they've added colorful detail to what was already an elaborate picture of some aspects of Sinatra's private life—his marriage to Ava Gardner, his kindness and cruelty to his hangers-on, and his energetic and soulless philandering. But although *Summers and Swan* have laid some important groundwork for the considered and sprawling biography their subject merits, this slackly written, cobbled-together book is third-rate *Vanity Fair* fodder, not a biography (in fact, the heavily and deftly reworked excerpt in that magazine is far better than this book). The authors devote a mere handful of pages to what was, after all, the one constant in and the main preoccupation of Sinatra's life—his music. A man often barely in control of himself, Sinatra was nevertheless indisputably a careful, obsessively committed, and hardworking artist. And when the authors do very briefly touch on some aspect of Sinatra's music (a paragraph on his fanatical attention to his transcendent phrasing, for example), they usually depend on quotations from authorities or other writers to make the point. Now that some valuable legwork has

been done, an enterprising editor should ask Hamill to overcome his scruples and take another shot.

Chanel, edited by *Harold Koda and Andrew Bolton* (Metropolitan Museum of Art/Yale). Coco Chanel's Madonna-like self-invention, Trump-like self-promotion, and Yoda-like pronouncements, together with her intense and convoluted love life (famously, when she launched her career as a couturier she was a kept woman; notoriously, she was a "horizontal" collaborator during the Second World War), have meant that writers have scrutinized her persona and biography more intently than the clothes she created and the look she defined. This swank book, however, published in conjunction with the current Chanel



exhibition at the Met, focuses on the continuities and evolution of the style of the house of Chanel from its inception, before the First World War, to its current permutation under the direction of Karl Lagerfeld (his impenetrable Teutonic blather, which as far as I can tell insults the founder of the house he presides over, is—thank goodness—confined to two pages). Fashion writing tends toward the gaseous, but Koda's introduction and the text of the exhibition catalogue he wrote with Bolton nicely explain Chanel's innovations, clearly define the essential qualities of her designs, and concretely convey the workings of cut and construction. The photographs—enhanced by Lagerfeld to, I must admit, haunting effect—of the variations on the "little black dress" (all of which marry traditional, elegant materials to precise tailoring, creating the impression of "little more than

a breeze," as *Harper's Bazaar* put it in 1923) and of the sumptuously astringent, squarish suits (with their exquisite but functional details and their "soft tailoring" and easily draped fabrics that allow them to drift over rather than cling to the body) testify to a living tradition that has tamed Lagerfeld even in his efforts to subvert it. After all, to quote Coco, "Fashion fades. Only style remains the same."

Edmund Wilson, by *Lewis M. Dabney* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Writing a short review of this long biography is impossible, because very few people under fifty—including those with the fanciest educations—will have even the vaguest notion of the life, accomplishments, and, it seems (alas), ephemeral significance of the man revealed in it.

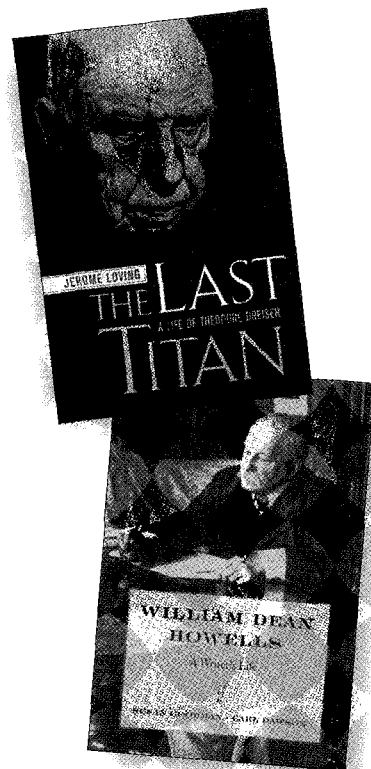
And hardly any of those will have read a word he wrote. But if they care a jot about ideas, history, and literature, and if they approach reading with passion and seriousness, that is their great loss. Although Wilson was also a playwright, a novelist, a poet, a magician, and a compulsive diarist, his highest achievements were as a critic and a journalist-historian of ideas. Taking an unusual approach that amalgamated biography, history, and unerringly astute literary interpretation, Wilson wrote the greatest book on our Civil War (*Patriotic Gore*); the most elegant and commanding history of the socialist idea (*To the Finland Station*, a book that Dabney justly claims is "the most significant imaginative work to come out of the thirties in the United States except for several of Faulkner's novels"); the best essay (along with George Orwell's) about Dickens; and the most searing reportage of America in the bleakest period of the Great Depression (*The American Jitters* and *Travels in Two Democracies*—largely unheralded masterpieces of what's now called narrative non-fiction). Wilson is one of the two or three most astute interpreters of Flaubert and Auden; he was the first critic to take seriously the hard-boiled fic-

tion coming out of California in the 1930s (*The Boys in the Backroom*); he wrote penetrating portraits of an array of countries and cultures, including Haiti, the Zuni, the Iroquois, and Western Europe at the end of the Second World War; in *Axel's Castle* he taught a generation of Americans how to read modernist literature; his editing of his close friend and Princeton classmate F. Scott Fitzgerald's unfinished novel, *The Last Tycoon*, and of Fitzgerald's posthumous collection of letters and notebook entries, *The Crack-Up*, is largely responsible for elevating that author into the canon from the obscurity in which he languished at the time of his death; he revealed and explicated the importance and complexities of the Dead Sea Scrolls—and he was probably the most astute adjudicator of contending scholarly theories regarding those texts (Wilson read Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Russian, Hungarian, French, and German). Nearly all his books were polished assemblages of pieces he'd written from the 1920s through the 1960s for *The New Yorker* (where he was the magazine's book reviewer and a staff writer) and for *The New Republic* (where he was an editor). Wilson had a rare gift for haute vulgarization (which has earned him the disdain of the theory-dominated academy)—he could tell a compelling, even dramatic, story about ideas. Deploying deft compression and apt quotation, he fused elegant, extended pen portraiture with precise criticism, and he wrote with supreme clarity and authority, yet in graceful, often sinuous prose (no less a judge than *The New Yorker's* editor William Shawn held that Wilson's style was among the best in the history of the language).

But he was in many ways a deeply distasteful man. Generous, loyal, and intellectually honest, Wilson was also a (frequently lonely) drinker of staggering capacity and a serial fornicator (he lost his virginity to another famously libidinous literary figure, Edna St. Vincent Millay). Not surprisingly, he was prone to rages and was at best imperious and at worst monstrous to his four wives. (His marriage to Mary McCarthy has to be one of the most turbulent

unions in literary history. Dabney's scrupulous account corrects some of the more outlandish and self-serving—and self-dramatizing—versions promulgated by McCarthy, but both parties emerge from this chronicle as spoiled and destructive.) Thanks to Wilson's meticulous, posthumously published diaries, in which he seems to have recorded his every sexual episode in harshly clinical detail (he appears at times to have bedded women solely for the purpose of recording the experiences), we already know far too much about his routine, which could be summarized as Stakhanovite reading, followed by concentrated writing, followed by boozy seduction, followed by kind of yucky sex. Wilson's previous biographer, Jeffrey Meyers, wrote a rounded if ultimately unsatisfying biography, so interested readers have already been treated to lots of unpleasantness. Dabney's book, for which he conducted dozens of interviews and spent decades digging in the archives, is more complete, and in its sorting of the facts from the rumors and apocryphal accounts that have barnacled Wilson's reputation, it's as definitive as we're likely to get—and as we need. But Dabney's aim was broader than Meyers's. He sought to write an intellectual biography. He has largely succeeded—he's a discerning reader and a clear writer, though he periodically oversimplifies the intellectual and, especially, the political context of Wilson's work and that of the people in his phenomenally wide and intellectually glittering circle (Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Isaiah Berlin, Auden, and Nabokov were at one time or another among his closest friends). But the great virtue of Wilson's work is that it needs no introduction. An accessible mandarin and a vivid writer who shunned abstraction, Wilson wrote books any one of which can still be simply picked up and read with enormous pleasure and profit. But I fear they won't be. With the optimism and myopia of a scholar consumed by his subject, Dabney sees Wilson as a vital influence in today's American intellectual and cultural life. I don't. To me, that life is alien and hostile to all that Wilson's work represents.

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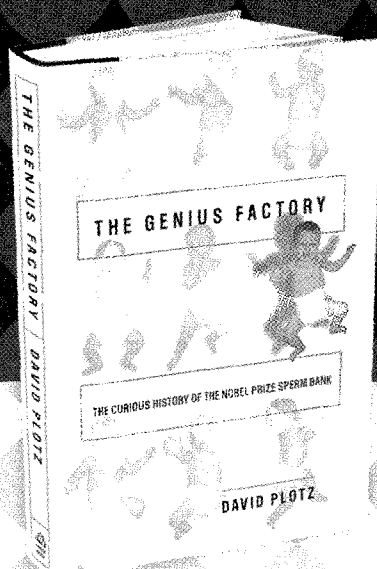
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The Lights That Failed, by Zara Steiner (Oxford). This book—the first installment of a two-volume diplomatic history of Europe between the First and Second World Wars—has an awesome heritage to live up to. It's the latest in the Oxford History of Modern Europe series, a group of now ten works written over the past half century by some of the English-speaking world's greatest historians. The books have aimed to present a definitive and synthetic summation of their subjects, from a distinct though not Procrustean point of view. All the volumes possess a striking combination of verve and authority, and some of them—Theodore Zeldin's two-volume *A History of French Passions* and, above all, A.J.P. Taylor's *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848–1918* (to which Steiner's work is a sequel)—are among the most stylish and acute monuments of the historian's art. Steiner, an American-born Cambridge historian who's previously written an incisive and invaluable account of British policy leading up to the First World War, has here undertaken a subject of daunting complexity. European diplomacy before the First World War and after the Second is a story of relations among a handful of major powers. But in the period Steiner examines, the newly created states of Eastern and Southern Europe were independent players, not yet mere satellites. In the period Taylor assayed, international relations could justly be confined to the study of diplomacy, war, and preparations for war. However, in this 938-page volume, which covers the years from the Paris Peace Conference, in 1919, to Hitler's appointment as chancellor, in 1933, Steiner must disentangle the knot of reparations, debt rescheduling, hyperinflation, balance of payments, currency fluctuations, devaluations, and a host of other vastly intricate and controversial aspects of domestic and international finance and economics. Deftly, with command and cool analysis, and in prose always lucid, often crisp, and more than sometimes elegantly epigrammatic, Steiner succeeds. Hers is a proudly and explicitly unfashionable work, and one of its chief virtues is to illuminate the world view

and unspoken assumptions of her historical actors, rather than to impose an interpretation of the past based on subsequent events. She insistently makes the reader see this period of European history as did those who lived it: as *post-war*, rather than *pre-war*. She also insists that readers grasp a truth that's nearly universally acknowledged in the historical community but that the popular and journalistic mind is incapable of absorbing (thanks largely to the lingering influence of Keynes's *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, a book she rightly pronounces "pernicious"): the Treaty of Versailles, though enormously flawed, was hardly a Carthaginian peace and neither economically nor geopolitically hobbled Germany.

Steiner's appraisal of the role of domestic politics and economics in foreign relations is probably the weakest aspect of her work (her evaluation of the impact of the Depression on the Nazis' rise to power is surprisingly thin), but with that exception her judgments are spot-on and her analysis is keen. The hallmark of this book is her nuanced dissection of the hopes for and limits to Franco-German reconciliation. Although she allows for the most generous interpretation of Berlin's aims, she subtly points if not to the inevitability of conflict, then to the near certainty of a fragile peace, regardless of the nature of the German regime. After all, any German government would seek the revival of German strength, which would mean that Germany would eventually emerge as the preponderant power on the Continent. The leaders of the democratic Weimar regime, committed to the perhaps irreconcilable values of liberalism and nationalism, professed themselves good Europeans who sought only equality among the great powers. But because equality—perhaps even security—for Germany meant danger for the rest of Europe, an inherent tension underlay their policies. Thus, given the realities of international behavior, the "lights" to which Steiner's title refers—"internationalism, multilateralism, disarmament"—were doomed to fail. ▀

Benjamin Schwarz is the literary editor and the national editor of The Atlantic.

Calamity Jane

The incoherent life (so far)
of Jane Fonda

BY TOM CARSON

Sorry, but I can't help it: I keep thinking we might all be better off if Jane Fonda had married Dan Rather. Imagine the meeting that could have spared us these two experts in banana-peel celebrity. Texas, 1965: On the sweltering, gamy set of Arthur Penn's unforgettable epic *The Chase*, a coltish actress moodily watches a pickup truck solidify the baked horizon's shimmer. This is her first Lillian Hellman script—yet she feels mysteriously empty inside. As luck would have it, she looks mysteriously empty outside, too, at least to the hardy but troubled young newsman behind the truck's wheel. While his upcoming network assignment to the green jungle hell of Indochina could be the making of him, a strange hunch that he'll never be as beloved as Walter Cronkite has him as poleaxed as a crawfish in Jell-O.

Their eyes lock. "My name is Dan," he says. "My name is Jane," she answers, noticing how his hairline mimics the virile contour of his jaw. The rest is scrapbooks. She gives up acting; he bails on CBS. Today they're an elderly husband-and-wife team of veterinarians in Lubbock, renowned halfway to El Paso for their unique sensitivity to the posteriors of horses. Otherwise, no one on God's earth has any idea who they are.

What makes this daydream tempting isn't only that right-wingers would have been denied decades of fun with Dan and Jane, who certainly have done more for Rush Limbaugh than they ever did for liberalism. The real reason they belong together is the magnificence of their delusional self-images. Convinced that he's America's cracker-barrel uncle, Rather will never grasp how often his idea of folksiness on the *CBS Evening News* resembled a mad Klingon taking over for Hal Holbrook in *Mark Twain Tonight!* No less doggedly, Fonda believes that her life is, above all, instructive—sort of like Saint Augustine's, with



a bit of Dorothy Day tossed in. Since their lack of humor about themselves is sterling—virginal, you want to say—neither of them could tolerate realizing that they're two of the most hilarious figures of the twentieth century.

That's why no matter what your preconceptions are, Fonda's *My Life So Far* is never boring. It's clear we're in for no minor feast of fatuity as soon as she explains that her purpose in looking back is to give her life, a hurricane in a pawnshop if ever there was one, unity: "Call me a control freak, but I don't want to be like Christopher Columbus, who didn't know where he was headed when he left, didn't know where he was when he got there, and didn't know where he'd been when he got back." As sunset nears, it's time to name those purple mountain majesties, and you have to admit that hubris this innocent has its charm.

However, we'd better understand that the endeavor has its useful, socially productive side. According to Fonda, she couldn't have written *My Life So Far* unless a key insight had (c'mon, guess) "liberated" her to do so: "Coming to see my various individual struggles within a broader societal context enabled me to understand that much

of my journey was a universal one for women—played out in different ways and with different outcomes, perhaps, but with common core experiences." It's also played

out with different incomes—and how much sweeter it is to be universal when you're traveling first class. Yet if nothing else, her predictably ludicrous but unexpectedly endearing determination to play schoolmarm during her celebrity striptease is enough to settle any remaining doubts about the validity of this woman's U.S. passport. That Fonda

MY LIFE SO FAR
by Jane Fonda
Random House

WAR & DESTINY

*How the Bush Revolution
in Foreign and Military Affairs
Redefined American Power*

JAMES KITFIELD

The U.S.-led "global war on terror" and the Iraq campaign are redefining the American epoch. To the all-important question of how the United States would wield its predominant power after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, President Bush and his team of top advisers fashioned a revolutionary answer: an America unconstrained by traditional bonds, its armed forces honed to a dominating edge by military transformation, could not just contain but decisively defeat the emerging threats of the 21st century—nihilistic Islamic terrorism, the spread of doomsday weapons, and the proliferation of failed or rogue states that feed those scourges.

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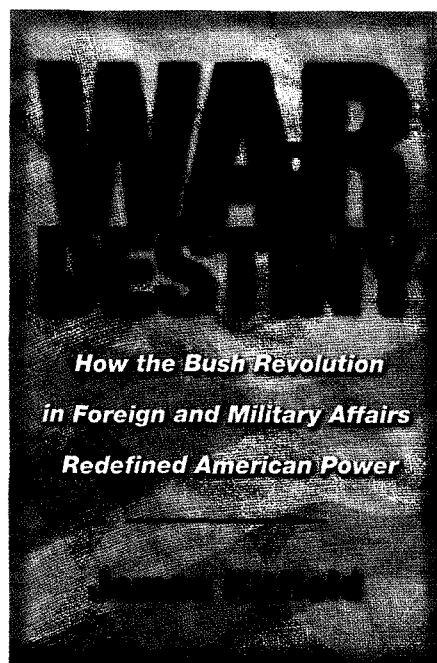
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can still be an *unconscious* narcissist after all these years is triumphant proof that she's as American as smart bombs and Bozo.

Honestly, how can you hate someone whose idea of a mea culpa is "Change always holds an element of self-interest, and mine was quite simply that I wanted to be a better person"? She's not entirely lacking in shrewdness, though, since she knows that to some extent her best shot at revising our perceptions of her is to accede to them. "A persistent assumption about me is that I am a puppet, ready for a new man to pull my strings," she writes. "There was some truth to this." Her first and best string-puller, of course, was her celebrated father, who notoriously saved his warmth for his movies; offscreen, Henry Fonda was a fjord, not a Lincoln. Just how effective his stony emotional withdrawal was in making him the parent to please is in no doubt. Even the trauma of her mother's suicide, soon after Henry asked for a divorce, drove the twelve-year-old Jane to shut down—Dad's ideal—instead of acting out, her more vulnerable brother Peter's reaction.

As Fonda grows, we get a litany of adolescent troubles, including the bulimia she didn't overcome until her forties—this book's major (trite) revelation—along with delayed menstruation and much sexual anxiety about her apparently malfunctioning "down there." (While I have every intention of sparing you the sentence that begins "I write about my vagina and vagina-related fears because..." its motives are so virtuous as to make you nostalgic for Cora Pearl.) Tragically, she goes to Vassar; starts modeling for *Vogue*; studies acting with Lee Strasberg, even as her Barbie-doll debut in Joshua Logan's *Tall Story* makes her doubt her calling (working for Logan might have made Olivier doubt his calling). Dad stays remote. To fans of the immortal movie version of Herman Wouk's *Youngblood Hawke*, it's touching to learn that she lost her virginity to actor James Franciscus, known to Jane as "Goey" and to us, of course, as "Bloody." Dad, by now on his fourth wife, whose name Fonda can barely bring herself to print—she's "the Italian" for some time—still stays remote.

Jane skips to Paris, an innocent abroad. Through her friends Yves Montand and Simone Signoret she discovers "France's intellectual Left, which included the other Simone (de Beauvoir), and her longtime companion, Jean-Paul Sartre, and of course Albert Camus, who had died in 1960." Although presumably inadvertent, the *Weekend at Bernie's* suggestion of a mummified Camus at the Café de Flore is charming; but the ripeness is all, and Fonda isn't yet ripe for politics. Enter Roger Vadim, the Hugh Hefner of the Nouvelle Vague.

Fond of Rogering his leading ladies (Brigitte Bardot and Catherine Deneuve among them), and also prone to choosing film locales for their proximity to casinos, Vadim is such an engaging satyr that describing him warms our autobiographer briefly into her least typical mode: frank enjoyment of life's quiddities for their own sake. After a

"an omen, though I didn't see it as such at the time," Fonda reflects. She also doesn't say of what, tempting us to picture flames that spell out HE'S A BUM, JANE. Then comes 1968: "perhaps the most turbulent, tumultuous year of the century," she reminds us with nostalgia. (Poor old 1945—always a bridesmaid, never a bride.) She and Vadim have just completed *Barbarella*, but Jane is restless; filming a silly sci-fi comedy "when so much substantive change was taking place in the world had acted as yeast to my malaise." She's also about to give birth to their daughter, and her inner radical is on the verge of blossoming too: "My pregnancy during that fertile year—1968—created a rich loam." Yeast, loam, malaise—suddenly Vadim's drinking looks so sensible.

Since Fonda is all too aware that in some quarters her antiwar activism will stigmatize her forever, her chap-

Fonda isolates one reason she did enjoy group sex: "I liked having an up-close view of the varied ways women express passion," she tells a friend. As they say in Hollywood, it's all about the work.

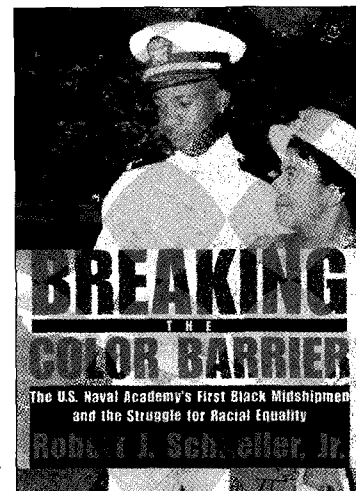
few colorful pages, though, she's back in the self-actualization saddle, fretting over "whether my emotional underdevelopment could surmount his 'charming' addictions" (to booze, gambling, etc.). Swept away on clouds of romance, Cauloises, and low self-esteem, Fonda even goes along with her lover-then-husband's taste for group sex—clearly the confession she's most embarrassed about. All the same, her bedroom contortions may have been as nothing compared with the verbal pretzel she turns herself into to rationalize her complaisance: "So adept was I at burying my real feelings and compartmentalizing myself that I eventually had myself convinced I enjoyed it." Later she isolates one reason she did enjoy it: "I liked having an up-close view of the varied ways women express passion," she tells a friend. As they say in Hollywood, it's all about the work.

Bigger storms are brewing, though. As she jets from L.A. to Vegas to marry Vadim, Watts is on fire down below—

ters on the Vietnam era are inevitably the most detailed and painstaking self-justification in the book. Her canniest defense is to locate the sources of her radicalism in the example set by a certain screen avatar of American ideals, with wise old Simone Signoret playing Glinda the Good Witch to spell out the connection: "I could see in her face that she had been waiting for this to happen," Fonda writes, as Simone—breaking out a bottle of "fine cabernet"—welcomes her to the Rolls-Royce barricades. "Somehow, through all the silliness of my lifestyle, she had maintained a firm belief that what she loved about my father from his movie roles was waiting inside me to manifest itself through action." The brilliance of this is that, in one fell swoop, Fonda not only places herself squarely in the American grain but also slyly ups the authenticity ante on Dad: he only *pretended* to be Tom Joad, the old fraud.

Still, her self-image is nothing if not ecumenical. On her way to Hanoi in

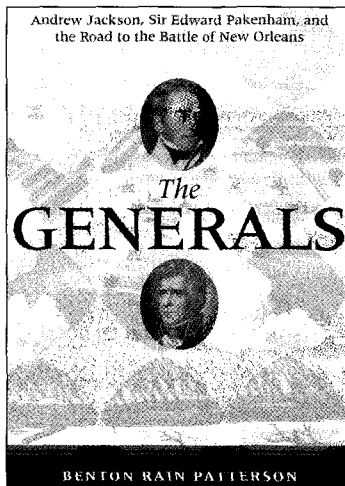
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1972, Fonda breaks her foot: “Bulimics have thin bones.” An idle comment? Guess again. A page later, flying over Vietnam, she’s struck by an eerie resemblance.

I begin to think of the country as a woman ... so small and vulnerable that any superpower would feel certain it could call her bluff in no time flat. What a thin little slip of a country she is, much like the small, thin-boned people who inhabit her.

She stops short of imagining them binging and purging, but we get the picture: Jane, too, will be pummeled, by rhetorical B-52s. What she never wholly faces up to is that the only real damage she did was to the antiwar movement, whose reputation she permanently sullied. Left-wingers, rather than jingoists, should be the ones least willing to forgive “Hanoi Jane”; although her characteristically vainglorious, self-dramatizing decision to publicly oppose

her way to portray American servicemen as victims of U.S. policy, not antagonists. But so what? Perhaps she can’t see why that photo is of a piece with her life, if not her ideology, but we can. Fully *in the moment*, as actors put it, she wasn’t thinking like a propagandist. She was thinking like a star.

By then Vadim was long gone, and Fonda had taken up with Tom Hayden. Either despite or because of the fact that they stayed married the longest, he comes off the least well of her three husbands. He’s also the egghead of the three (early on, Fonda compares following his New Left political arguments to “being with Vadim before I spoke fluent French”). But personal relationships, and indeed personality, aren’t his strong suit. Once the last chopper leaves Saigon, the magic starts to fade; after losing a Senate race, Hayden tries incrementalism instead by starting a California grassroots orga-

Tom Hayden is the egghead of her three husbands. But personal relationships, and indeed personality, aren’t his strong suit. Once the last chopper leaves Saigon, the magic starts to fade.

the war was the most morally justified one of her life, her judgment of how to put it into practice was disastrous.

Because Fonda is only human, I think it’s understandable that this lavishly illustrated book omits the famous photograph of a delighted-looking Jane sitting behind a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun. She does print a somewhat less damning picture taken moments earlier, which as honesty goes is fair enough, and her own account of what happened during a “two-minute lapse of sanity [that] will haunt me until I die” is predictably overwrought, a mite disingenuous, and as fascinating as a lecture on zeppelin safety from the *Hindenburg’s* captain. Even if her unduly earnest attempt to put herself in hostile vets’ shoes goes from reasonable (she’s “Henry Fonda’s privileged daughter,” who seems to be thumbing her nose at her country) to goofy (“Barbarella has become their enemy”), she’s not wrong to remind us that in much of her state-side antiwar activity she’d gone out of

nization called the Campaign for Economic Democracy. If you’d forgotten (and I had myself), it’s very funny to be reminded that the workout-video empire that turned Fonda into a 1980s gym icon started out as a loyal wife’s attempt to help fill the CED’s coffers.

It didn’t stay one for long. Throughout *My Life So Far*, Fonda has taken care to portray herself as a creature of enthusiasms, never calculation. But when the fitness tycoon starts gushing that she’s no businesswoman, you may want to reach for the truth serum. Just look at what a ninny she is! First she sheds the partner who actually originated the exercise routine (“At least I’ve tried over the intervening years to make it up to Leni”). Then, with *Jane Fonda’s Workout* making money hand over fists-on-hips, she snips its pipeline to Hayden’s nonprofit: “I felt we had more than fulfilled our original mission of providing [the CED] with a solid financial base.” Her husband’s presumably thrilled reaction to

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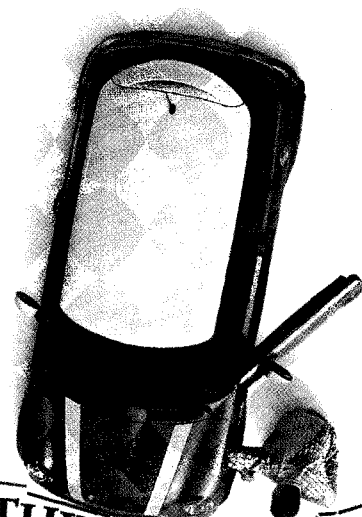
If you ask me, this unlikely but lucrative self-reinvention as an *empowered* Barbie doll—not her turn as “Hanoi Jane”—marks Fonda’s apotheosis: the glorious moment when her life’s incoherence becomes *sui generis*, and no longer a reaction to circumstances. From now on, in the great tradition of star-spangled imbecilism, nothing she does can make us bat an eye—not ending up as the ultimate trophy wife when Ted Turner, who clearly awed Fonda by being so much more *blissfully* self-centered, decided she was Scarlett to his Rhett; not the excruciating mix of celebrity therapy and guaranteed box office that was her onscreen “reconciliation” with her father in *On Golden Pond*. In her dutifully lachrymose description of filming with Henry, one story stands out. As they rehearse their big scene, Jane—knowing the gesture will disturb him—resists her impulse to touch his arm while telling him she wants to be his friend; resists it, that is, until the take, when Dad’s surprise produces exactly the spontaneously flustered reaction she wants. “It worked,” she reports. “I was so happy.”

Henry Fonda was seventy-five and in poor health, but spotting the glint of that shiv of professional opportunism in his daughter’s valedictory bouquet is actually refreshing. It’s one of too few times this book reminds us that manipulating emotions is what movie stars get paid for—and that Jane, for all her vicissitudes, is no slouch at delivering when the cameras turn. Still, her two Oscars to the contrary, she’s unlikely to be remembered as a great actress—good, yes; great, no—and one king-sized irony of her whole fraught saga is that today nobody much under thirty even knows who the hell Henry was. Because his daughter has spent her life playing both clown and trapeze act in the American circus in a way Dad never did, she’s now the more immortal of the two. Anyone who wants to protest that Jane is less deserving is more unpatriotic than she ever was, or just takes no delight in slapstick. There are times when I suspect they come to the same thing. ■

Tom Carson is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic* and the author of *Gilligan’s Wake*, a novel.

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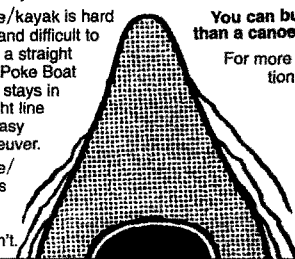
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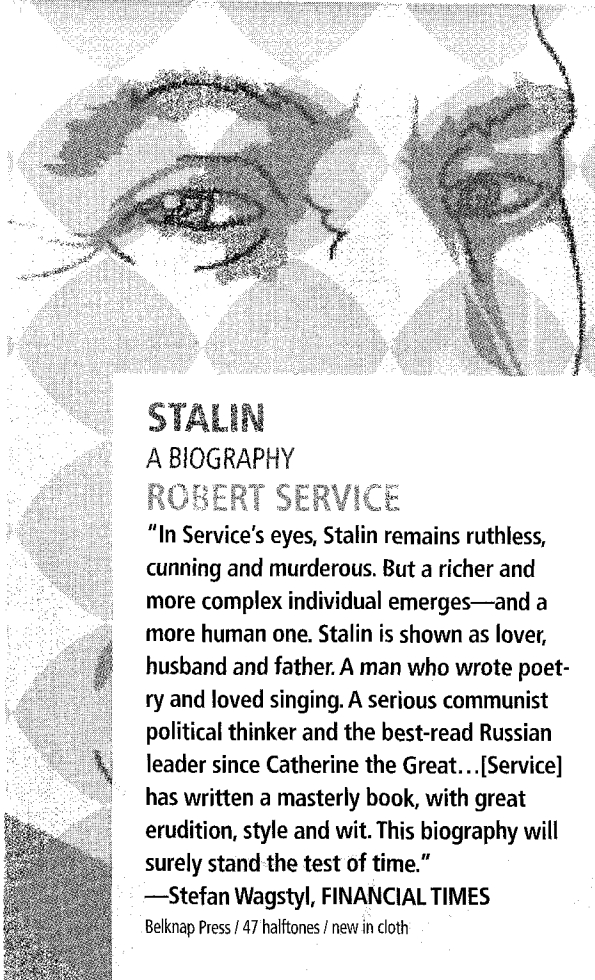


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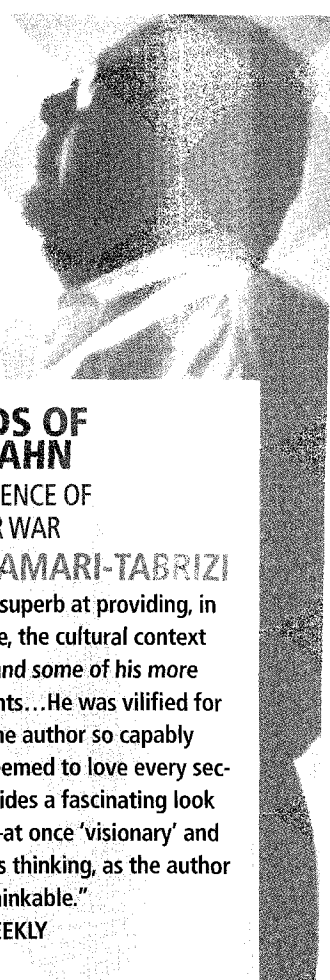
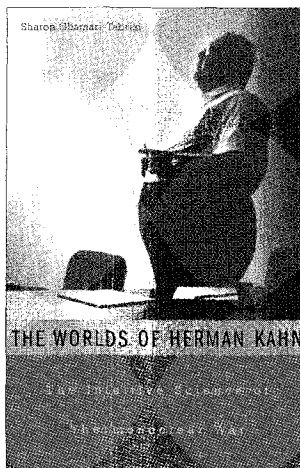
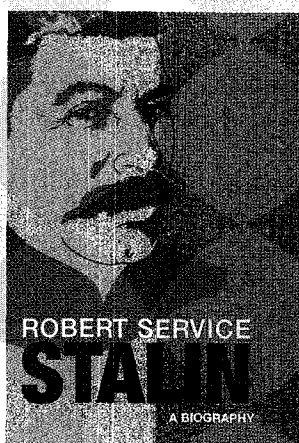
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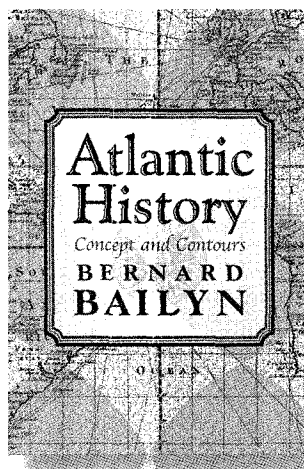
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BOOKS

Fidelity With a Wandering Eye

Love is noble, love is hard, and women cheat just as readily as men

BY CRISTINA NEHRING

It's official: the conventional wisdom is false. It's not men who leave their wives for younger, blonder temptresses; it's women who leave their husbands for—well, just about anybody. Or nobody. The fact is, women initiate 66 percent of divorces between partners over forty. That, at least, is what they reported during a major AARP study, released last year. That is also the impression one gleans when contemplating a new spate of books and shows, from ABC's already classic *Desperate Housewives* to hot spring titles including most notably *Undressing Infidelity: Why More Wives Are Unfaithful*.

This is refreshing news—in some senses, at least. It puts a great big dent in sexual stereotypes with which we have been too long saddled: the security-besotted, marriage-angling, nest-

squatting female and her counterpart, the freedom-loving, wild-oat-sowing male Steppenwolf. They made for an insipid image all along, but everybody seemed to conspire in it, from self-help authors (who assumed that their

UNDRESSING
INFIDELITY:
Why More Wives
Are Unfaithful
by Diane Shader Smith
Adams Media

female readers wanted nothing more than tips on how to “catch” and “tame” a husband) to family counselors, magazine pundits, and, of course, evolutionary psychologists (who say it's all biology: girls are made to sit in the straw and warm their eggs; guys are made to fly through the heavens and spread their seed). Women have been told they are helpless and dependent for so long that we have begun to believe it—and to object vociferously when we are not treated as such. If men whose company we enjoy don't assume we want to be their wives and thus propose in short

order, we consider it “an insult” (in the approving words of the sexpert-rabbi Shmuley Boteach) and declare ourselves aggrieved. The result? Women have grown dull while men have grown smug, offering their hands (when they do) as one might bestow a winning lottery ticket: “There you go, honey, I guess I've made *your* life.” Having given that, they too often feel they have given all; they've done their bit in the kingdom of relationships, and their companions may now live happily ever after.

Only they generally don't, as the books and studies make all too clear. Women need more than security to thrive, it seems. In fact, they often court the square opposite of security, as Diane Shader Smith learned when she began interviewing women for *Undressing Infidelity*. They court risk; they court intensity, variety, novelty, and disaster—very much like men. It is a peculiarity of our age to portray one sex as nature's safe and law-abiding partner—to cast it as the erotically muted, risk-averse nanny to man. A few hundred years before Jesus Christ, Aristophanes presented women as rowdy and ebullient sexual predators, fighting uninhibitedly over access to handsome boys. Utopia, as described by Aristophanes' *Congresswomen*, consists of “free fornication,” with no grandma left behind. Nubile young girls can legally be seduced “only after the male adolescent has first applied his resources to the full satisfaction of a bona fide senile female.” Ovid expends many lines in his *Art of Love* warning men against underestimating the ladies' amorous adventurism. In Dante's *Inferno* the circle of hell for sins of the flesh is populated in great part by women. It is the lust of a mother (not, say, an uncle) that so tortures Shakespeare's Hamlet (“Frailty, thy name is woman”), a girl's sexual fickleness that takes out the hero in *Troilus and Cressida*, a queen's love for an ass that brings down the house in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The greatest adulterers in the Western canon—Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina, Molly Bloom, Carmen—have, in fact, been adulteresses. Each had a faithful husband at home.

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Why do women leave? “Verbal, physical or emotional abuse” is the first reason cited in the AARP study by wives who initiated divorces. And yet “abuse” played little role in the decisions of Smith’s interviewees to risk their unions, most of which sound altogether more docile than violent. So why did they do it? Smith herself is remarkably unhelpful on this score. “The reasons women cheat,” she concludes, “are as varied as the women themselves.” Fair enough. But surely more-provocative hypotheses might be floated. Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, proffered a few as early as the end of the eighteenth century, and her words still resonate today. Women, she declared, are reared for love: the novels they read, the fairy tales they hear, all prepare them for a future of fiery sentiments and gallant attentions. But “a husband cannot long pay those attentions with the passion necessary to excite lively emotions, and the [female] heart, accustomed to lively emotions, turns to a new lover, or pines in secret.”

Is this so far wrong today? Don’t women even now harbor romantic ideals that are tangibly more central to their lives than to men’s, and thus more easily (and disastrously) disappointed? A man may dream of a passionate soulmate, as a woman does, but if he does not find one, he will rechannel that desire into his work, his sports, his substance abuse, his war-making—all things that define a man’s identity more commonly than do his emotional efforts. A woman has these occupations open to her as well, but rightly or wrongly (and I think *rightly*) they are often subordinated to the love plot in her life. This is something a certain kind of feminist has lamented—and a certain kind of moralist might reasonably find dangerous, since it does indeed make women more sensitive to marital dissatisfaction. But on balance it is a noble hierarchy.

Romantic love has suffered a demotion following the wars of the sexes in recent decades, with the result that we’ve forgotten it is the source of some of our civilization’s

greatest acts of heroism and genius. For what else did knights slay dragons in the Middle Ages, did Petrarch write poetry, did Dante take on *The Divine Comedy*, Zeus turn himself into a swan, and Penelope weave her gorgeous web? Even evolutionary psychologists say we are never so strong as when we are in love, never so poised for high achievement or fierce battle. (It has to do with dopamine levels, apparently.) Instead of trying to curb the power of this love plot in one of the sexes, as feminists like the late Carolyn Heilbrun have done, might it not be better to re-sanction it in both?

But why re-sanction romantic love if it leads not merely to maladaptive perfectionism but also to a propensity for homewrecking? The easy answer is that it doesn’t. If women initiate 66 percent of divorces, they also initiate probably 96 percent of marriage counseling. For every new door they open to love, they have made several attempts to fix the old. That’s what you do when you care about eros: you work on all fronts. The hard answer is that sometimes it’s okay to wreck a home. Sometimes divorce is the brave and not the cowardly option. We all know couples who shouldn’t be together but stay together anyway—excruciatingly, eternally, disastrously. The human animal is no more frivolous and irresponsible than fearful and lethargic. For every person who throws out a sublime relationship, there are two who masochistically cling to a visibly destructive one. (Note the wild success of books like *He’s Just Not That Into You* and *How to Break Your Addiction to a Person*.)

Further, women are more frustrated with their marriages than men for myriad reasons—and only one (albeit a big one) is romantic idealism. Another is family culture. If the customer is supposedly king in American stores, the child is incontrovertibly king in American families. Of the women Smith describes in her book, many are overworked soccer moms. She interviews one as she drives—interminably—around town dropping and fetching her kids at after-school enrichment activities. Smith herself mentions in

THE LADY IS A TRAMP

Five books about endlessly inspiring, morally vacuous women

BY SALLY SINGER

Edie: An American Biography, by Jean Stein, edited by George Plimpton (1982). Nearly thirty-five years after Edie Sedgwick's death from an overdose, at the age of twenty-eight, her glamorous vapor continues to intoxicate alienated, artsy, wannabe-anorexic teens (who, rightly or wrongly, credit her hipness to her lack of hips); fashion designers (John Galliano's spring 2005 runway show for Christian Dior Haute Couture opened with twenty Edies in black tights and skimpy Gernreich-y sheaths); and film executives (Sienna Miller *was* set to star in the next attempt at a biopic). But who was this WASPy twig? In Jean Stein's impressive oral history focusing on the Factory years, Edie emerges as a speed freak who wore fur coats over bare skin, arrived late to parties and left early, and tore through a sizable inheritance in a matter of months, and whose only real work involved making over her legs in the summer of '64. The persistence of Edie's iconicity can be credited, paradoxically, to Stein's attempt to make real this woman whose short life was at once a sad waste of time and—culturally, ad infinitum—the time of seemingly everyone's life.

The Education of a French Model, by Kiki (1955). A smashing little memoir, with an introduction by a thoroughly smashed Ernest Hemingway, by Kiki de Montparnasse, the artist's model who was muse or whore to artist or john (depending on the *soir*) in Paris in the 1920s. First published in 1929, it chronicles her early years (peasant roots, single mom, gnawing hunger and desperation) and her glory days (Man Ray, Cocteau, Papa H.); the English edition also contains Kiki's account of her impoverished existence in New York in the 1940s, where—surreally—she found comfort in the presence of a dead fish.

Faithfull: An Autobiography, by Marianne Faithfull and David Dalton (1994). Were there ever more-glamorous groupies than Faithfull and her stunning partner in just about everything, Anita Pallenberg? They bed-swapped with the Stones, when getting inside Mick's trou-



Edie Sedgwick

sers still meant something, and then Marianne dropped the Stones for drugs. This wonderfully matter-of-fact account of sixties decadence British-style is evidence that Faithfull cannot ultimately be charged with moral vacuity: self-knowledge may have come late ("I was the victim of cool, of the tyranny of hip," she writes. "It almost killed me"), but not too late for her to record with clear eyes the years in which clear eyes rarely existed. The same cannot be said for Faithfull's fellow blurry young things: Pallenberg and Talitha Getty (Jean Paul Getty Jr.'s junkie wife, who—before dying young—was photographed on a Marrakesh rooftop wearing a caftan that has inspired designers to think "ethnic" every fourth spring).

Holy Skirts, by René Steinke (2005). The German-born Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven was at once a sexual and artistic adventurer/revolutionary and a kookily clad nut case. She arrived in Greenwich Village in 1917 and stunned the self-styled culturally avant-garde set by swanning about in bustled evening gowns with flashing taillights, dresses made from newspaper, and necklaces of spoons. René Steinke's fictional re-imagining of Man Ray and

Duchamp's mad muse is wonderfully insightful about the self-absorption required to be a fashion avatar.

Leigh Bowery: The Life and Times of an Icon, by Sue Tilley (1997). Club impresario and performance artist Leigh Bowery was of course not a woman, but as someone who during his life always sought to defy gender categorization, he surely would have taken a perverse pleasure in being cast as such. Sue Tilley's biography—a big sloppy kiss to her enormous friend—offers a fascinating glimpse into the mundane business of being fabulous. She and Bowery scour charity shops, sew costumes, have little bitchfests about the preceding nights at Taboo. How does one actually go about dressing up as a Paki from space, or with a face covered in brown paint full of some kind of crispy cereal and a urinal on one's head? Surely the magical, unfathomable force that led Bowery to create his many grotesque personae lies at the crux of his appeal to artists (from Lucian Freud to Madonna) and designers (most notably Westwood, Gaultier, and Galliano). Tilley goes a long way toward dispelling the mystery without breaking the spell.

Sally Singer is the fashion news and features director at *Vogue*.

NEW FICTION

Finds and flops

BY ELIZABETH JUDD

Writers who produce wildly entertaining books often go underestimated by the literary establishment.

Melissa Bank's terrific new novel lacks the topical conflicts and poetic imagery that critics appreciate, and its strong suit—a companionable, offhand sense of humor leading to subtle revelations of character—is deceptively difficult to achieve. Without straining for effect, Bank captures the lively inner world of an unassuming narrator, Sophie Applebaum, who endures a continual series of minor



THE WONDER SPOT

by Melissa Bank
Viking

social and professional failures but manages to avoid crushing defeat. Allergic to the spotlight, Sophie tends to recede into the background of her episodic story (which spans twenty-five years), permitting the vivid escapades of family and friends to upstage her own.

The Wonder Spot

is strikingly similar to Bank's deservedly beloved (and presumably autobiographical) 1999 best seller *The Girls' Guide to Hunting and Fishing*; we revisit an essentially happy suburban childhood, the death of a father, flirtations with various creative-writing cads and other woes of a comically rudderless love life. And both books are funny in a generous-spirited way, but *The Wonder Spot* takes on weightier issues. Bank's central theme is the lifelong quest to balance obligation and personal pleasure, a conflict each Applebaum must somehow resolve. Sophie may have difficulty perceiving her role in the unfolding dramas, but she nonetheless works through the big questions by embracing the struggles of others. And so when Sophie's dutiful mother jettisons her rigid notions of propriety and rekindles an old romance, we rightly assume that Sophie, too, will ultimately choose happiness. The first time her mom utters her lover's name, Sophie says, "I heard something in her voice that I'd only ever seen—dozens of tiny silver fish jumping out of the bay in Martha's Vineyard—and it was as surprising and beautiful a sound as it had been a sight."

Elizabeth Judd is a writer in Washington, D.C.

passing that she cooks and serves not three meals a day but three or more dietary regimens.

Mediterranean for my husband Mark; red meat every two hours for our fourteen-year-old son, Micah; and four hot meals a day for our twelve-year-old daughter, Mallory. And then there are the kids' friends, who show up almost every day with their insatiable, and often picky, teenage appetites.

How can one doubt that these women—all of them attractive, we hear; and not long ago accustomed to lavish attention themselves—fantasize about escape? A place where they can be not just cogs in the domestico-pedagogic machine but colorful individuals, sexual entities, and romantic agents? A woman "cannot contentedly become ... an upper servant after being treated as a goddess," Wollstonecraft observed. And in today's superchild culture the typical wife is not what Wollstonecraft (with her French maid, her cook, and her habit of calling children "animals") would have considered an "upper servant"; she's a lot more like a galley slave.

Abjection to children often correlates directly with churlishness to mates. Children are extensions of our egos, so we dote on them, but spouses are often merely co-managers of a home business. As such, they are part of the same unsentimental consumer culture that defines our relationship to, say, submarine sandwiches or coffee drinks. The explosion of Internet dating, in which you announce the traits you want in a lover as you'd announce the ingredients you want in a latte, and remorselessly exchange him if he's not made to specifications, has hastened still further the commodification of romance—and its desanctification.

This, alas, is the worst of the many reasons that modern women trade partners at such a clip: not because they are into ethereal romance but because they are into eternal choice. The mystery and the altruism of love have been subsumed into the ruthless commerce of self-gratification. "I was looking for three things when I married Don," says one woman Smith interviews. "I wanted children, I wanted a house, and I wanted someone I could talk to.

Don said he would give me all that ..."

We are intended to admire this self-knowledge, because it gets the speaker off compulsive affairs and up to the altar. But it does not do so in a way that could ever be moving—or flattering—to her mate. She might as easily have said, "I wanted a South Seas cruise, a masseur, and someone to keep me in Chanel"—and the person in her arms would have been another man entirely (as, for that matter, the man who fulfilled her domestic and maternal wishes could have been too). Most of the extramarital relations in Smith's book are, in fact, shallow, opportunistic affairs. What makes them cut so deep is the price at which they come.

Almost all affairs, or all that don't occur in what used to be called an open marriage, are cause for deception. And deception—far more than extracurricular sex alone—is the cardinal relationship killer. If a lover has a single vast advantage over a spouse, it is not that he is newer or more attractive to the woman who takes him; it is that she can be honest with him. He knows about her husband; her husband does not know about him. Result: she feels closer to the person who knows her most fully—her lover. With the man at her hearth she feels the way one feels with all people one tricks: either superior, because of one's imagined cleverness, or inferior, because of one's ostensible guilt. Or both. But what she rarely feels, either at the moment of deception or afterward, is joined. (All this, of course, is equally true when the sexes are reversed.)

Lightly started, affairs become heavy barriers between partners. If they do not destroy a marriage, as they did for several of Smith's subjects, they take the sap and spark out of it. They turn a soulmate into a dupe, a friend into a jailer, conjugal pleasure into conjugal duty.

At its best, matrimony is a quixotic proposition. The odds that it will go well—or, at least, *very* well—are slim. The best minds over time (and also the worst) have studied alternatives to it, official and unofficial, public and private. The medieval courtier wed one person and wooed another. Such

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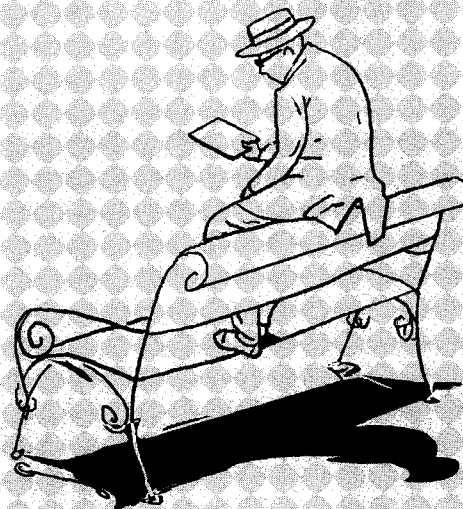
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Romantic writers as Shelley and Byron inaugurated a high-minded promiscuity that took little notice of who was joined to whom. A generation later the long and quietly married Emerson came down hard against formalized vows: "No love can be bound by oath or covenant to secure it against a higher love." Emerson's wilder-eyed contemporary, the utopian Charles Fourier, spent decades formulating theories of democratic sex—as non-possessive as it was non-marital. Even today social scientists who, like Helen Fisher, inform us that amorous loyalty does not naturally exceed twelve to thirty-six months predict a transition to different kinds of unions—for example, marriages contracted for one to five years and, like magazine subscriptions, renewable.

And yet for all the rational appeal of such a proposition, no one who has ever been in love, who has ever felt the transformative wand of passion tap his or her shoulder, wants to go to the altar and say "For better or worse, until the next Olympics do us part." The very concept of love brings with it intimations of eternity, even allusions to death. Lovers don't want only to live together; they want to die together. How diminishing it is to let our prudent, miserly reason trump our brave-hearted, generous passion. *Perhaps in this case we should let instinct prevail over argument.*

A second marriage, as Samuel Johnson observed, represents "the triumph of hope over experience." The experience of marriage is one of conflict between ideals: the ideal of loving companionship and that of erotic intensity; the ideal of unflagging devotion to a single person and that of emotional responsiveness to many. And yet some of these ideals are not as irreconcilable—or as irreconcilable with marriage—as they appear. Unshakable loyalty to a central partner does not preclude passionate responses to other people. If it seems that way, it is only because of the puritanism, the pious emotional parsimony, of our American era.

Diane Shader Smith's book provides, ironically, a perfect example of this. Her introduction is an alarmist confession

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of her attraction to a man other than
 her husband. She recounts in detail
 her nervousness around him, her sup-
 posedly dangerous fascination with
 his charm. She criminalizes her feel-
 ings. And so, one might add (albeit
 more understandably, since she has led
 the way), does her husband. In a dif-
 ferent culture her attraction would be
 viewed by her readers, herself, and her
 husband as perfectly natural and even
 commendable. What sort of a creature
 would you be if, having once found a
 human being who stirs your heart (and
 whom you marry, if you follow Rabbi
 Boteach's example, by age twenty-one),
 you were never stirred again?

The key is to incorporate chemistry
 into our marital lives, not to snuff it
 out. We are erotic and emotional
 animals, and when we react most fully
 to people, we react to them erotically
 and emotionally. We react this way to
 teachers and to students; to pop stars
 and to politicians; to interns, novelists,
 and waiters; to our elders and our
 juniors. It is a part of what allows us
 to relate to human beings across the
 social, political, and cultural spectrums.
 To demonize this responsiveness is to
 truncate our sensibility, our humanity.
 Better to share our passing fancies with
 our mates, to turn them like colored
 glass in the light, lest they become
 blades in our pockets. For this we need
 magnanimous partners. And we need an
 18-karat commitment to those partners,
 who over the years will inevitably seem
 less perfect than those glinting shards
 of novelty in the corner of our sight.

"To fall in love is to create a religion
 that has a fallible god," said Jorge
 Luis Borges. To love truly is to stay
 in love after the fall. It is to love more
 gratefully, more potently, because our
 god has come down to earth: the spirit
 has been made flesh and now walks—
 and slips, and flounders, and slouches
 —among us.

It's a delicate proposition—counter-
 intuitive, presumptuous, heady, unreason-
 able. And yet therein lies its nobility
 and, perhaps, its necessity. ■

*Cristina Nehring is at work on Women in Love: A
 Feminist Defense of Romance. Her essay "Domestic-
 ated Goddess," about Sylvia Plath, appeared in the
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BOOKS

A Breath of Dust

*"I wasn't even bothering whether I understood what I was saying," T. S. Eliot said of *The Waste Land*. A new guide to the poem inadvertently suggests we should take him at his word*

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

Lawrence Rainey's introduction to this book opens with an anecdote about a starstruck and tongue-tied Donald Hall, the American poet (and, like Eliot, a former editor of the *Harvard Advocate*), who journeyed to meet his hero in London in 1951. Having babbled his way through the interview, Hall rose to take his leave.

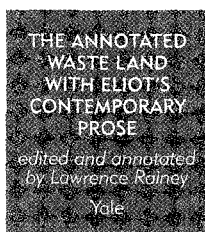
Then Eliot appeared to search for the right phrase with which to send me off. He looked me in the eyes, and set off into a slow, meandering sentence. "Let me see," said T. S. Eliot, "forty years ago I went from Harvard to Oxford. Now you are going from Harvard to Oxford. What advice can I give you?" He paused delicately, shrewdly, while I waited with greed for the words which I would repeat for the rest of my life, the advice from elder to younger, setting me off on the road of emulation. When he had ticked off the comedian's exact milliseconds of pause, he said, "Have you any long underwear?"

I sat for a second or two after reading that before I remembered its analogue, in a novel that had been published seven years prior to this encounter. In *Brideshead Revisited*, Charles Ryder's father gives him sage counsel about going to Oxford.

Do you know in the summer before I was going up, your cousin Alfred rode over to Boughton especially to give me a piece of advice? And do you know what that advice was? "Ned," he said, "there's one thing I must beg of you. *Always* wear a tall hat on Sundays during term."

A few pages later on Charles meets Anthony Blanche at a lunchtime feast in Oxford, after which the louche, stammering, epicene figure "stood on the balcony with a megaphone which had appeared surprisingly among the

bric-a-brac of Sebastian's room, and in languishing, sobbing tones recited passages from *The Waste Land* to the sweated and muffled throng that was on its way to the river."



"I, Tiresias have foresuffered all," he sobbed to them from the Venetian arches—"Enacted on this same d-divan or b-bed, I who have sat by Thebes below the wall And walked among the l-l-lowest of the dead ..."

Like many of the post-Great War generation, Waugh had taken *The Waste Land* as the specially resonant poem of an epoch, and indeed paid it a further compliment by alluding to one of its more famous lines ("I will show you fear in a handful of dust") in the title of one of his late novels, *A Handful of Dust*.

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-four*, which was published just before Hall met Eliot at the London offices of Faber and Faber, has the glacial O'Brien tell Winston Smith, "There is no possi-

bility that any perceptible change will happen within our own lifetime. We are the dead. Our only true life is in the future. We shall take part in it as handfuls of dust and splinters of bone." When O'Brien springs the trap on Smith and leads him to Room 101, it might be said that "we are in rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones." (My student Michael Weiss, who pointed this out to me, speculates that it might be a partial or subliminal revenge on Orwell's part for Eliot's refusal to let Faber and Faber publish *Animal Farm*.)

But these are among, and only among, the influences of *The Waste Land*. What of the influences upon it? Several of them are fairly easy to determine: Geoffrey Chaucer, Andrew Marvell, Charles Baudelaire, the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ulysses*, and James Thomson's "The City of Dreadful Night." They are easy to determine partly because they are obvious; partly because Eliot did not attempt to disguise the provenance of his poem, or at least not ostensibly; and partly because he proudly accompanied the final book with a convenient set of references and an acknowledgment of debts. This tactic, which Peter Ackroyd in his biography says was adopted "in order to avoid the charges of plagiarism which had been leveled at his earlier poetry," shows Eliot to have been, like Bellow's Augie March, a "Columbus of the near-at-hand." A hasty visit to Margate is pressed into service

as readily as a recent text from James Joyce, or a class on the Buddha that the poet had attended not long before, and few of the London landmarks are very far from the bank in "The City" at which Eliot toiled from nine to five.

Rainey's edition is best read in conjunction with Valerie Eliot's 1971 facsimile of the successive drafts of the poem. Here we can see, as they occurred, the alterations wrought by the editorial hand of Ezra Pound. As dedicatee of *The Waste Land*, Pound is usually



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credited with trimming and improving the text, and certainly deserves recognition for promoting and marketing it. Most of the changes, however, turn out to have been for the worse. (In any case, as a reader of the *Cantos* will readily see, if Pound was truly any good at pruning and refining, he must have been literature's most salient example of the physician who could not heal himself.) It might now seem a bit stale for Eliot to have put the last words of Kurtz on his epigraph page, because to us "the horror, the horror" has become a cliché. It wasn't so in 1922, and the death wish of the Cumaean Sybil, substituted by Pound, rather robs the poem of its main retrospective claim, which is to modernity. A spirited opening stave, very much in debt to Joyce and depicting a night of pointless debauchery, was cast aside. Worst of all, Pound shielded readers from Eliot's lengthy and intense prologue to the moment "When lovely woman stoops to folly," in Part III of "The Fire Sermon." I would have wanted to keep the Popean parody:

This ended, to the steaming bath
she moves,
Her tresses fanned by little flutt'ring
Loves:
Odours, confectioned by the cunning
French,
Disguise the good old hearty female
stench.

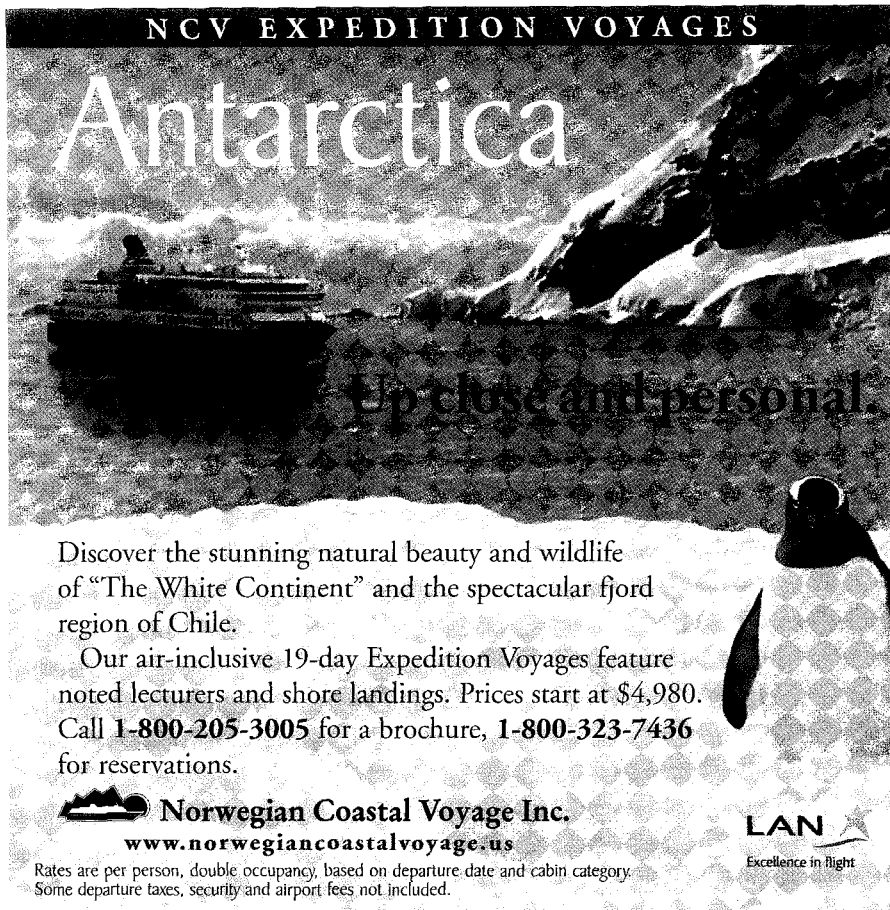
The reek of disgust there—which is horridly protracted over several more excised lines—is essential to an understanding of Eliot, and has a very direct connection to the distraught marital relations that, among many other pressures, kept his nerves on a knife edge while he was composing the poem.

Rainey writes that *The Waste Land* is "preceded by its reputation," which is hardly worth saying, since that is what "reputation" means. He adds that it is "endowed with authority so monumental that a reader is tempted to overlook the poem itself." Perhaps. But since we must indeed look back at the work through the refraction of what we already "know" about Eliot, it might be worth asking why such a pious Christian felt so impelled to exhaust himself in the invocation of darkness and despair. Eliot had

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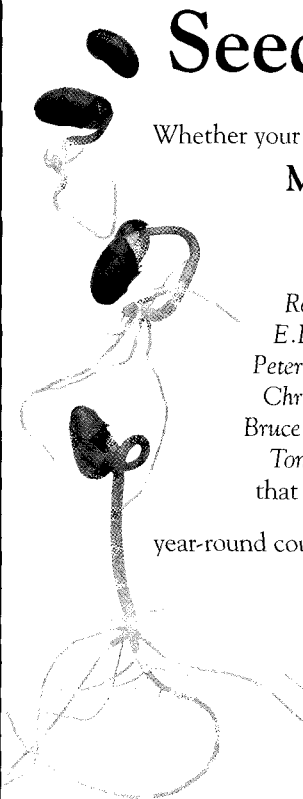
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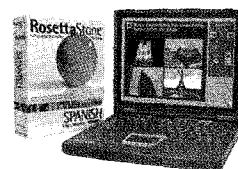
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not quite become a committed Anglo-Catholic in 1922, but he had formed an attachment to the royalist, Catholic, traditionalist ideas of Charles Maurras and his Action Française, which later mutated (as did Eliot) toward fascism. Most of Eliot's later work is much more "contained," as it were, and less "wild" (a term frequently used by reviewers of *The Waste Land*). He himself became more formal, more Anglicized, more calm and devotional. Yet there was plainly a death wish at work, and none of the subsequent attachments to order and to the organic society could quite conceal it.

Exegesis can go only so far. It is extremely useful to know that while Eliot was trying to make up his mind about the twentieth century, he depended so much on Bertrand Russell for friendship and material help. We know that he had studied Eastern religion, but might it not have been from the famously agnostic Russell that he drew encouragement to cite those "faiths" that preceded monotheism? No answer in these pages. It was for me, however, astonishingly interesting to discover that there was actually a popular song, written for the Ziegfeld Follies in 1912, called "That Shakespearian Rag." Its authors, Gene Buck and Herman Ruby, cannot have imagined the moan of immortalization that Eliot was to give their ephemeral ditty. (Not content with annexing and slightly mangling Buck and Ruby's title, Eliot even inverted their comment "Most in-tel-li-gent, ve-ry el-e-gant" and could be accused of echoing their view that "that old clas-si-cal drag / Has the proper stuff.")

The allegation of plagiarism is often tiresome, since it is very difficult to establish originality or authenticity, and since poetry almost invariably involves synthesis (which Ackroyd rightly describes as Eliot's particular gift). Still, it is surprising to find no mention at all, in this extensively sourced volume, of Madison Cawein's poem *Waste Land*. Cawein was as distant from Eliot, in poetic terms, as it was possible to be. He was a Kentucky blues man and a barroom versifier. However, like Eliot, he was fascinated by the Celtic twilight and the search

NEW FICTION

A CLOSE READ

What makes good writing good

BY CHRISTINA SCHWARZ



"I left Cardman's rooms and wandered out into the quad, holding my error-strewn chapter rolled up like a baton, like a truncheon, in my hand. The afternoon sun obliquely struck the venerable buildings, picking out the detailing of the stonework with admirable clarity. The razored lawn was immaculate, perfectly striped, unbadged by weed or daisy, almost indecently, absurdly green. I realized that I hated old buildings, hated honey-colored crafted stone, hated scholarship, hated arrogant young dons with their superior ways. So much hate, I reflected, as I crossed Magdalen Bridge, can't be good for one. The leaves of my chapter helixed gently down onto the turbid brown waters of the Cherwell."—from "Adult Video," in **Fascination**, by William Boyd (Knopf)

Boyd effortlessly executes all the sophisticated tricks of conventional style even as he pushes beyond convention, taking liberties with language and proportion. The paragraph is both remarkably rich and supremely efficient, not least because Boyd chooses words that, even apart from their sentences, convey scads of information. "Wandered" and "error-strewn," for instance, establish immediately the narrator's dissonance with "immaculate" surroundings characterized by "clarity." And no more than "baton" and "truncheon" are necessary to communicate his mood. (In fact, either one of these would have sufficed, but the unexpected near redundancy draws the reader's attention, perhaps even suggests the beating of the stick.) "Razored" implies that Oxford's perfection is unnatural, harsh, uninviting. The string of phrases that follow not only reiterate and fortify these sentiments but also, in their breathless excess, signal the narrator's mounting hysteria. (It's a mark of Boyd's genius that "unbadged" here and the verb "helixed" in the final sentence read as wonderfully apt and evocative words rather than ones

that—as Microsoft's spell-checker says—are "not in dictionary.") The next sentence—classically comic in its repetition, in its rejection of all that is commonly revered, and in its juxtaposition of formal language ("honey-colored crafted stone") with a childish word ("hate")—neatly pulls together all the elements the paragraph has launched. And, keeping the narrative lively, it unveils something new and significant: the true source of the narrator's humiliation—"arrogant young dons and their superior ways." (Actually, one particular arrogant young don.) Lest excessive emotion turn comedy to tragedy, Boyd radically changes tone, injecting a note of reserve as he cleverly—and, again, with remarkable efficiency—uses an aside ("as I crossed Magdalen Bridge") to bring in the river. The Cherwell's waters, as muddy as the narrator's paper is muddled, provide the natural resting place for the pages introduced at the outset, now loosened and falling as "leaves"—an especially happy term in that it works both literally and figuratively here.

Christina Schwarz is the author of the novels *Drowning Ruth* and *All Is Vanity*.

for the Grail. And his verses, with their haunting title, did appear in the January 1913 edition of *Poetry* magazine. Since that very issue also contained an essay by Ezra Pound on the new poets writing in London, it seems more rather than less likely that Eliot would have read it.

I looked at the man; I saw him plain;
Like a dead weed, grey and wan,
Or a breath of dust. I looked again—
And man and dog were gone,
Like wisps of the graying dawn.

After fanatically going to buy some long underwear immediately after his meeting with Eliot, Donald Hall shook himself, as all servile acolytes eventually must, and decided that the great man must have been joking. But how certain can we be that Hall was correct in this assumption? Several of Eliot's English friends caught him overdoing things: wearing a bowler hat at odd moments, and saluting uniformed guardsmen in the street—trying too hard, in other words. (Auden did a much bet-

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- 16 Dialects—Two Tongues in One Mouth
- 17 Dialects—The Standard as Token of the Past
- 18 Dialects—Spoken Style, Written Style
- 19 Dialects—The Fallacy of Blackboard Grammar
- 20 Language Mixture—Words
- 21 Language Mixture—Grammar
- 22 Language Mixture—Language Areas
- 23 Language Develops Beyond the Call of Duty
- 24 Language Interrupted
- 25 A New Perspective on the Story of English
- 26 Does Culture Drive Language Change?
- 27 Language Starts Over—Pidgins
- 28 Language Starts Over—Creoles I
- 29 Language Starts Over—Creoles II
- 30 Language Starts Over—Signs of the New
- 31 Language Starts Over—The Creole Continuum
- 32 What Is Black English?
- 33 Language Death—The Problem
- 34 Language Death—Prognosis
- 35 Artificial Languages
- 36 Finale—Master Class

world's first language have been reconstructed.

Professor McWhorter looks at the reasoning behind this work and the objections to it.

- One of the most enticing ideas of 20th-century linguistics is that language determines the way we perceive the world. But is this really true?
- The Ebonics debate of the mid-1990s focused attention on Black English. What is the nature of this dialect and where did it come from?

Professor McWhorter also briefs you on the recent connection made between an obscure language of Nepal and the language family of Papua New Guinea, which may represent the oldest documentable historical relationship between words, extending back as far as 75,000 years.

In discovering how linguists think, you will begin to see language in an entirely new way. You will learn that everything about a language is eternally

and inherently changeable, from its word order and grammar to the very sound and meaning of basic words.

That's why Professor McWhorter describes language as "like one of those lava lamps from the 1970s. It's not marching toward an ideal, and it's not slowly going to the dogs. It's always just variations of the same thing—endless morphings."

What You Will Learn

Lectures 1 and 2. The course begins with language basics. You learn what distinguishes the language ability of humans from the signaling system of animals. You explore the effort to discover universal grammar common to all languages.

Lectures 3–7. The first language has evolved into 6,000 today. You explore mechanisms for such change.

Lectures 8–13. Dr. McWhorter introduces language families, starting with Indo-European, which comprises languages from India to Ireland. He covers the heated debate over the first language.



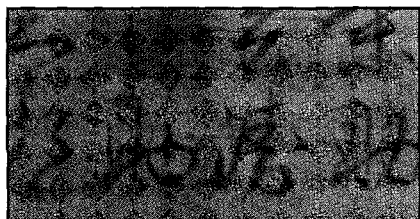
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Lectures 14–19. This section explores dialects, which are variations on a common theme, rather than bastardizations of a “legitimate” standard variety.

Lectures 20–22. You study the phenomenon of language mixture. Languages are constantly mixing with one another on all levels. As a result, English comprises a vocabulary of largely borrowed terms.

Lectures 23–25. You learn how processes of language change lead some languages to develop more grammatical machinery than they need; others are “streamlined.”



Japanese calligraphy. In Japanese, the only consonant that can occur at the end of a word is *n*. (Lecture 9)
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Lecture 26. The famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis proposes that features of our grammars channel how we think.

Lectures 27–32. Dr. McWhorter focuses on pidgins and creoles. A pidgin is a stripped-down version of a language suitable for passing use. Creoles emerge when the pidgin is used as everyday language.

Lectures 33 and 34. You now learn how languages go extinct and what can be done to preserve them.

Lectures 35 and 36. You explore artificial languages and conclude by examining a single English sentence etymologically.

Your Professor

Professor John McWhorter (Ph.D., Stanford University) is Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute. An accomplished scholar, he is also a skilled popularizer, whose book *The Power of Babel* was called “startling, provocative, and remarkably entertaining” by the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. The *London Times* calls him “a born teacher.”

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BEST SELLERS ABROAD

JAPAN

Top ten works of nonfiction, as of April 2005, based on sales data compiled by Nippon Shuppan Hanbai Inc. (Nippan), Japan's largest book and magazine distributor.

1. How Smart and Stupid People Talk, by Yuichi Higuchi. This "essential guide to avoid being called an idiot" cautions that stupidity can be revealed in even the most casual of conversations.

2. Why Bamboo-Pole Sellers Won't Go Bankrupt and Other Accounting Mysteries, by Shinya Yamada. A pop approach to accounting.

3. The Etiquette of Good Humor, by Takashi Saito. If you want to raise your productivity and uncover your hidden talents, get rid of sulky moods.

4. The Idiot Wall, by Takeshi Yoro. Aims to explain and relieve the frustrations felt by adversaries: bosses and subordinates, the young and the elderly, Americans and Islamic fundamentalists. A best seller since 2003.

5. The Art of Healthy Living, by Hiroyuki Itsuki. How one man's unorthodox lifestyle has enabled him to avoid hospitals for fifty years.

6. The Hag-ification of Aging Women: Reclaiming Female Sexuality, by Chizuru Misago. A health expert takes a second look at the older female body.

7. Change Your Fortune Through Zodiac Science, by Kazuko Hosoki. A guide to managing your health, your job, and your finances through astrology and feng shui.

8. A Korean in Japan: Torn Between Two Motherlands, by Kang Sang-jung. Insights into Japanese-Korean relations from a University of Tokyo professor of information studies.

9. Essays in Idleness for Everyday Life, by Takashi Saito. The contemporary relevance of a much revered fourteenth-century classic by Kenko Yoshida.

10. How to Write Prose That Suggests Intelligence, by Juzo Koizumi. A sort of *Elements of Style* for Japanese communicators.

— MAKIKO KITAMURA

ter job of becoming an American, or at least a New Yorker, than Tom from St. Louis did of becoming a stage Englishman.) At other times Eliot was apparently far too dismissive and laconic.

Various critics have done me the honor to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it, indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling.

He was to tell the *Paris Review* that in the composition of the closing sections "I wasn't even bothering whether I understood what I was saying." There seems no reason at all why we should not take him at his word. Defensive modesty of this variety can often be

worth noting; what critic has ever succeeded in getting any sense or any beauty out of the final pages? And in what conceivable universe—even the batty, sinister one of Ezra Pound, who insisted that the poem open in that manner—is April the cruelest month?

It is not disputable that by publishing *The Waste Land* when he did, Eliot caught something of the zeitgeist and enthralled those who needed borrowed words and concepts to capture or re-express the desolation of Europe after 1918. But this latest attempt at context and explication has the effect, prefigured in earlier scrutinies, of helping to further demystify what is certainly the most overrated poem in the Anglo-American canon. ▀

Christopher Hitchens is a contributing editor of The Atlantic and a columnist for Vanity Fair.

BOOKS

You Might as Well Live

Nick Hornby's characters could care less

BY JON ZOBENICA

Nick Hornby's zippy novels *High Fidelity* and *About a Boy* plumbed the depths of humankind's would-be shallows. In each a character clinging absurdly to a sense of his own emotional insignificance is finally moved, despite himself, to embrace life's complex if at times mortifying drama. In his latest Hornby has almost perfectly reversed the formula, and to the extent that he succeeds, he fails. *A Long Way Down* opens with high drama—literally, as four suicidal strangers chance on one another atop a London tower block from which they mean to throw themselves. The mood broken by the encounter, they agree to a temporary non-suicide pact, strike up a grudging and dysfunctional friendship, and find themselves in a series of misadventures over the course of which they learn to embrace absurd emotional insignificance as an answer to life's mortifying drama.

It's a worthy notion—typical of the good-hearted Hornby. Also typical is a

thoroughgoing pop-culture sensibility, which gets the better of him this time around. The four lead characters do "meet cute," after a fashion, and are little more than types: there's a cad with a totaled career and a twitching conscience, a middle-aged mom as straight man, a foul-mouthed pixie, and, because this is Hornby, a frustrated musician-cum-pizza delivery guy who's depressed that his life isn't the power ballad he thought it would be.

And as they go through their various challenges together, and give their alternating and unreliable accounts of themselves and the events at hand (in direct, often irritating testimonials), the whole thing starts to suggest the work of the reality-TV impresario Mark Burnett—a sort of *Survivor: London*, in which no one is eliminated. The main problem, however, is more basic than that: as the characters noisily learn to care less, the reader quietly does the same. ▀

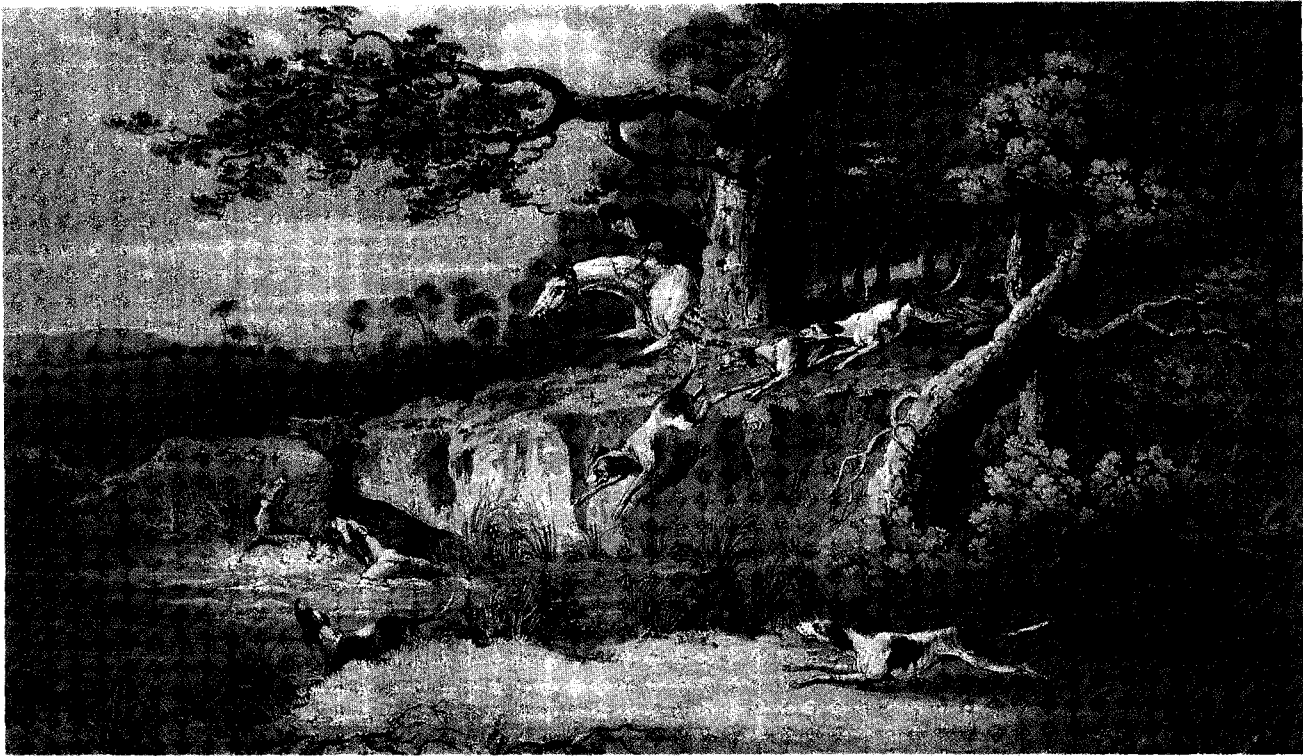
Jon Zobenica is a staff editor at The Atlantic.

A LONG WAY DOWN

by Nick Hornby
Riverhead

PURSUIT & RETREATS

JULY/AUGUST 2005 | THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY



SPORT

Masters of the Hunt

So the British have banned the killing of foxes and other wild mammals with the aid of dogs. Now what? A report from the sponge-wet moors of Barmy Britannia

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

A stag flanked by two female red deer, or "hinds," trotted down a steep moorland pasture toward a wood. Two mounted hunters were behind them, and staghounds were in between. The deer's trot was faster than the hunters' canter and as fast as the all-out run of the hounds. A horn was blown. We were off—over a soaked, slippery sheep meadow, between the stone posts of a narrow gate, down a muddy track perilous with ruts, into a country lane barely an arm's breadth wide, through the tiny streets of an old village with tourists

hopping out of our way, and then making a hairpin turn onto a paved road, speeding uphill around blind curves, and narrowly avoiding several head-on collisions with trucks. It was a thrilling ride, even if it was in a Suzuki SUV driven by a retired grocer—an enthusiast of stag hunting who had volunteered to show me the Devon and Somerset Staghounds hunt on Exmoor, in England's West Country.

We arrived at a hilltop opposite the steep pasture and above the woods. From there I could look across a val-

ley at ... not much. On the crest of the far slope several dozen members of the hunt were sitting on their horses. They watched two dogs sniffing the underbrush below. Two men in scarlet coats were with the dogs, more closely watching them sniff.

The idea of a stag hunt evokes chivalry—knights in jerkins and hose, ladies on sidesaddles with wimples and billowing dresses, a white stag symbolizing something-or-other, and Robin Hood getting in the way. An actual stag hunt is more like a horseback meeting of a county planning commission. The equestrian committee is responding to deer-population-growth issues and deer-herd rural sprawl. Red deer are noble animals—big, anyway. They are half again the size of American white-tails. In the fall a mature stag has antlers that could hang the hats of a small town in Texas. But red deer are also pests. England is intensely cultivated. A



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Dad may have a broken lever corkscrew in a drawer somewhere. But it's not the original Rabbit Corkscrew. And chances are it has no warranty, while the Rabbit's is good for ten years. Even if you could afford to give Mona Lisa to Dad, she can't open wine in three seconds like the Rabbit. Her inscrutable smile, however, may be due to the wine she drank while sitting for her portrait.

Where To Go Rabbit Hunting:
Crate & Barrel, Sur La Table, Bloomingdale's,
Marshall Field's,
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farmer may find a hundred red deer in his pasture, each eating as much grass as three sheep.

A chivalrous aspect to stag hunting remains, however. The three hunts in the Exmoor region maintain, with noblesse oblige, a twenty-four-hour emergency service for sick or injured deer. Mostly these are deer that have been hit by cars and have crawled off into the bushes—as many as a hundred of them a year. Members of the hunts will come out in the middle of the night to track these suffering creatures. In some years the hunters do as much euthanizing as they do hunting.

Each stag hunt has a “harbourer,” a specialist whose job is to watch the herds and select a specific quarry, chosen for its lack of Darwinian promise. Only this one animal is to be hunted.

For a proper hunt, or “meet,” in which Rovers and BMWs do not initiate the pursuit, the harbourer spends the

hounds. Then (rather disappointingly for those whose imaginations run to tenderhearted indignation or to blood-lust) the hounds do not tear the stag to shreds. They bark.

There's probably not much else they could do with an irked and antler-waving stag. Staghounds are not giant Scottish deerhounds or hulking, red-eyed mastiffs. They're just foxhounds, happy and hound-doggy and friendly if you aren't prey. “You can set your baby down in the middle of a pack,” a hunter told me, “and they'll lick him silly.”

What happens to the stag is that the huntsman walks over to it and prosaically shoots it in the head with a special short-barreled, folding-stock shotgun. This is an illegal weapon in Great Britain. But on stag hunts it's legally required.

Speaking of Britain's laws, killing wild mammals with the aid of dogs, as the Exmoor hunt was trying to do, is forbidden. Except when—as I under-

I was trying to take notes and avoid horse droppings. “Is he all right?” a farmer asked. Later my friend said, “He thought you were an ‘anti.’ They come around bothering the hunts.”

previous day and night making sure of the stag's location. On the morning of the hunt he reports to the huntsman. The huntsman brings in older, experienced hounds, called “tufters,” to separate the stag from the herd. It was this singling-out that I was watching in the steep moorland pasture. Although it wasn't working perfectly. As unpromising as that young stag may have been from the harbourer's point of view, the two hinds thought he was worth running away with.

Once the stag is solitary, the huntsman's assistant, the “whipper-in,” is supposed to bring up the full pack, and the hunt's members and guests fall in behind the hounds. Miles and miles of furious cross-country galloping ensues.

Unless it doesn't. As it seemed not to be doing from my vantage point across the valley.

When the chase does happen, the usual outcome is that the stag, at last, turns and “stands at bay,” facing the

stand the parliamentary Hunting Act of 2004—it is mandatory. The act contains certain conditions for “exempt hunting” that allow the killing of wild mammals with the aid of dogs—if “as soon as possible after being found or flushed out the wild mammal is shot dead by a competent person.” No letting it go, even if it's Bambi's mother. Furthermore, only two dogs may be used at a time. And no letting the dogs kill the wild mammals, the way fox hunters always have done. The stain must be upon you, not your pet.

The Hunting Act came into effect on February 18, 2005, a few weeks before this Exmoor meet. I got in touch with Adrian Dangar, the hunting correspondent for *The Field*, a British field-sports magazine. He said that I shouldn't write about fox hunting, which is the most notable activity banned under the act. It's all that anybody is writing about. And it's such a social occasion. He said that the stag

hunters were a doughty and resolute lot, and stag hunting was more of a way of life.

I went to Exmoor with Adrian. We stayed with the chairman of the stag hunt, Tom Yandle. He was doughty and resolute, the owner of a family sheep farm of centuries' standing. I went to the meet expecting a scene of American seething, full of the half-suppressed violence that Americans thwarted in their beliefs or their hobbies half-suppress so well. What I found was a cheerful, natty crowd on horseback, booted and spurred and listening to a talk from the hunt secretary about strict adherence to the Hunting Act, especially in the matter of using just two dogs. The whole pack of staghounds was there, but they'd been split into pairs, with each twosome in the back of a different vehicle. The hunt secretary gave her opinion that hunting the pairs serially was in accord with the letter and spirit of the law.

Having just two dogs in the field was exactly the problem. So I was told by the retired grocer and other hunt followers gathered on the hilltop vantage point, watching the lack of action through binoculars. Two hounds were not enough to break the stag away from the hinds. Or two hounds were not enough to make the stag stand at bay. Two hounds were certainly not enough to make what I was told was the music of a pack in full cry.

The followers were local farmers and farm wives, mostly past middle age. Many had ridden with the hunt years before. The men wore tweed jackets and neckties. The women wore tweed skirts and twinsets. Everyone wore waxed cotton Barbour jackets. The hunt members were dressed in black and brown riding coats, buff whipcord breeches, and hunting bowlers. They wore elaborately tied and gold-pinned white stocks at their throats. All the clothes were seasoned and washed to a perfect Ralph Lauren degree. If hunting dies out, from where will Ralph draw outdoorsy English inspiration? Will suburban Americans be wearing the undershirts, rolled trousers, and hankies-on-the-head of English sunbathers?

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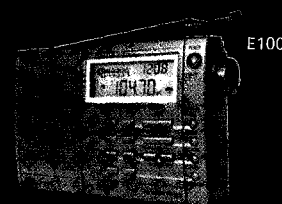
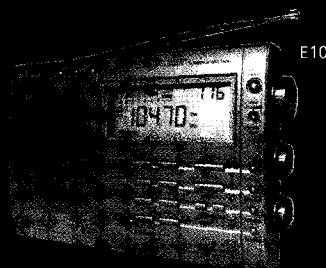


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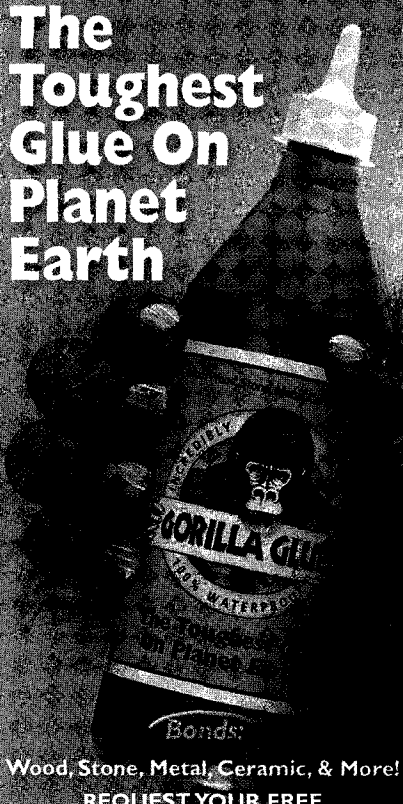


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The hunt was moving. Horses were trotting over the far hill. The two hounds did their best in the music department. There was a spate of elderly, excited driving as hunt followers hurried to find a better view. We parked by a tributary of the River Exe. The stag either did or didn't go into a strip of woods along the bank. The hounds weren't sure. The followers weren't sure. Possibly the stag came out of the woods. Possibly he didn't. The hunters went into the woods and came out. This sounds as interesting as cricket. And to the onlookers it was. The crowd had grown to forty or more and now included children in small tweeds and small Barbour jackets, and a man selling tea and sandwiches from a van. They all watched intently, the tea vendor included. There was a tense murmuring, as from a golf gallery.

The staghounds and stag hunters trotted through a farmyard, and I followed on foot. Some local farmers are not hospitable to the traffic through their property—not hospitable, specifically, to the traffic of me. I was trying to take notes and make haste and avoid deep puddles and horse droppings, and I wasn't wearing a necktie. "Is he all right?" I heard a farmer ask.

"He thought you were an 'anti,'" the retired grocer explained later. "They come around bothering the hunts."

According to a brochure from the League Against Cruel Sports, "The League ... has collected an enormous amount of evidence of the cruelty of hunting. Years of undercover work and hunt monitoring has enabled [members of parliament] to see the real face of hunting."

Beyond the farm, on the Exmoor upland, the real face of hunting was soaking wet. The scenery was an alluring frustration: heather-covered, bosomy hills rising above dark nests of woods. A green girlfriend of a landscape. But somebody else's girlfriend, greeting the hunt with cold drizzle and sharp wind.

This buoyed everyone's spirits. The British manner of cheerfully not complaining can't be maintained when there's nothing to cheerfully not complain about.

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Forty horses ran across the moor. Stag hunting is not as show-offy as fox hunting. There's no jumping of ditches, hedges, and gates. Exmoor is wet like a bath sponge; no use ditching it for drainage. The hedges are as high as tennis backboards and rise from stone heaps piled up since Roman times. And the farmers leave the gates open because some things are more important than keeping sheep in. I witnessed none of the hat-losing, horse-flipping spectacles seen in engravings on the walls of steakhouses. And to be truthful, my entire knowledge of hunting on horseback has been gained by staring at such decor between courses.

I had been offered a tame mount on which to follow the hunt.

"How tame?" I asked.

"Very tame."

"There was a man who used to come through my neighborhood in the 1950s with a pony and a camera ..."

"Not that tame."

Wind, rain, and temperature grew worse. The hunt descended into a precipitous dell where I'd have thought the riders would have to walk their mounts. They didn't. But I couldn't even walk. I returned to where the hunt followers were gathered by the side of a road. The followers were disturbed. A pale and agitated young couple were walking down the road. Surely these were "antis." They were dressed head-to-toe in black.

They turned out to be lost backpackers who'd made the mistake of going out into nature for fun. They were wet and miserable. The hunters were not, or didn't feel that they were. But the stag and every trace of it had vanished, and the hunters decided to "pack it in, to spare the horses."

Tom, Adrian, and I headed back to Tom's farm in his horse van, a bit disappointed. And then through the van windows came that music I'd been told about: the full cry of a pack. It is a bouilabaisse of a noise, with something in it of happy kids on a playground, honking geese headed for your decoys, and the wheeee of a deep-sea fishing reel when you've hooked something huge.

This particular music was being sung in soprano. A beagle pack, thirty-

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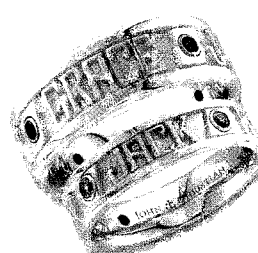
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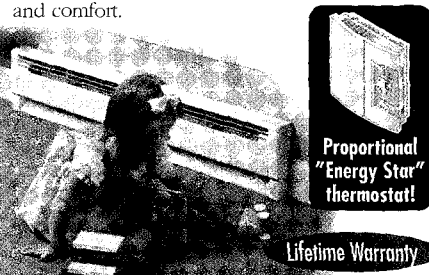
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some strong, was bounding across a pasture. We got out and hurried in the direction of the chase.

Beagling is like fox hunting or stag hunting except that the quarry is hare, and it's done without benefit of horses. Beaglers follow the pack—at a very brisk pace—on foot. Hunting hares with beagles is banned by the Hunting Act. But rabbits can still be hunted. "Because they're considered pests," Tom said. "Because a lot of Labour voters hunt rabbits," Adrian said. Also, for some reason, "the hunting of a hare which has been shot" is permitted.

The pack arced away from us across a broad field. Just as it did, the hare that the beagles weren't supposed to be hunting came at the three of us with a speed hardly credible in a land animal. If it had been less nimble (and bigger), it would have bowled us over. The dogs seemed to have lost the scent.

"The hare went that way!" Tom shouted to the master of the beagle hounds.

"The *shot* hare!" Adrian shouted.

"The 'bush rabbit,' you mean!" the master shouted back.

We spent an hour with the beagles. They no more got a bush rabbit than Tom and Adrian had got a stag, but the clambering and clamor of the beagles was a joy. I'm a strong advocate for animal rights. I am an animal. I belong to Animal NATO—us, dogs, horses (cats are France). And I belong to Animal WTO. We export feed to sheep, cows, pigs, and chickens, and, to maintain the balance of trade, we eat them.

The Yandles gave a dinner that night. Their house was of *Middlemarch* era but with fewer old bores writing the *Key to All Mythologies*, and with more stag heads on the walls. The main course was pork roast from a farm pig, rather than venison from the Exmoor stag (which in any case would have needed to hang for a week). Miscellaneous small terriers sat on guests' laps.

The consensus of the party was that the hunting ban had to do less with loving animals than with bullying people. This was not a class struggle, I was told. The working class was all for hunting, Baroness Ann Mallalieu said. And she was a Labour peer.

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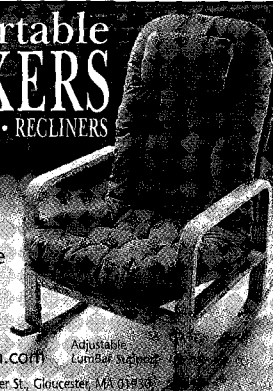
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Nor was it, she said (she herself proved the point), a Labour-Tory conflict. Instead, all agreed, a certain kind of today's urban elite was getting back at what they saw as a traditional elitism that had no use, as Tom Yandle put it, for people "with shaved heads and five earrings and their husbands just as bad." But, all agreed again, hunts aren't as posh as they used to be—and they never were.

In a way, the bullies are understandable. There's a certain satisfaction in taking something away from people perceived as having been too certain and self-confident for too long, people who've dominated society but whose dominance is slipping away. Network news anchors come to mind.

Then again, the bullies aren't understandable. Adrian used to be the master of foxhounds at the Quorn hunt, in Leicestershire. One day the antis were

The League Against Cruel Sports was founded in 1924, with antecedents dating to Hogarth's *The Four Stages of Cruelty*. Here are a few of the league's past presidents: Edith Sitwell, Lord Grey de Ruthyn, the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Listowel, the Reverend Lord Soper. And a brochure published by the league shows how long and deep is the controversy in Britain about man and his relationship with the animals that are his friends, his relatives, and his dinner. In 1822 Britain passed a law against improper treatment of cattle, the first animal-welfare legislation in history. In 1835 Britain outlawed dogfighting, cockfighting, bullbaiting, bearbaiting, and badger baiting. In 1929 the Labour Party adopted a platform plank opposing blood sports (although it held four parliamentary majorities before it fulfilled that campaign promise).

A brochure from the League Against Cruel Sports shows how deep is the controversy in Britain about man and his relationship with the animals that are his friends and his dinner.

there. "With balaclavas pulled down like the IRA," Adrian said. "One told me, 'We'll smash up your car tonight, Adrian.' They knew me by name. They didn't smash my car. They broke every window in my house. I found my dog and her litter of pups covered in shards of glass."

Several of the other guests hunted foxes as well as stags. The fox hunts were doing all right since the hunting ban. They'd taken up "drag hunting." Someone rides ahead pulling cloth soaked in fox scent behind him. The hounds and the hunters follow his course. And if an actual fox pops up along the way ... well, who can blame the dogs? Ninety-one foxes were killed on the first day of the hunting ban. But what will the country pub of the future be named? The Something That Smells Like a Fox and Hounds?

In a cultivated, sonorous voice Mike Hobday, spokesman for the League Against Cruel Sports, answered my questions a week later in London.

"There's a long history of criticism of hunting," Mike said. "The people who established the League Against Cruel Sports had a background in the humanitarian movement—animal suffering, welfare of children, prohibition."

I didn't ask if the humanitarian movement had trouble prioritizing. I did ask, "Why the focus on hunting rather than, say, factory farming, with its animal penitentiaries?"

"The reasons are twofold," Mike said. "Firstly, fox hunting is an emotive issue. The sight of the blood and gore tugs at the heartstrings. It makes powerful television."

"Secondly," Mike said, "hunting is done for entertainment. It's a sport."

I asked why the law permitted hunting rabbits but not hares.

"The league's view is that cruelty to any animal in the name of sport is wrong. Parliament's view was to make a distinction between activities that were 'necessary' and activities that were undertaken for sport."

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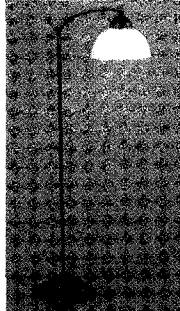


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principal British pro-hunting group. Apparently both the league and the alliance enjoy majority support among the British public. According to a 1997 Gallup poll for *The Daily Telegraph*, 80 percent of Britons disapproved of hunting foxes with hounds. According to a 2004 ICM poll for *The Sunday Telegraph*, 70 percent of Britons believed the police should not enforce the hunting ban.

I wanted to know why hunting (that is, chasing animals with dogs) was banned but shooting (pointing or flushing animals with dogs) wasn't.

"With shooting," Mike said, "there are clear steps that people can take to minimize suffering."

Mike said, hunting is "not an issue of class but an issue of behavior." He added, "Hunters are seen to behave in a very arrogant fashion—hunts going through small holdings and gardens. Hunters are very poor about apologizing. There's an attitude of entitlement by hunters: 'It's our land, and we have the right.'"

In America that would be all the apologizing needed. I mentioned how different America was—how Senator Kerry hadn't been able to get through his presidential campaign without going on a goose hunt, so there'd be a photo of him holding a gun.

"But not a goose," Mike said.

Mike told me an anecdote, though

the nearby Tate Modern, to look at the works of Damien Hirst. He is the artist who has floated a sheep in formaldehyde and sliced a cow into sections and so forth for the sake of sculpture. He is a today's-urban-elite kind of artist—cutting-edge, one might say. Unfortunately, the Tate Modern had only one piece by Hirst on display: some seashells with a curator's commentary on the wall beside them.

"You kill things to look at them," Hirst has said. In this work he arranges a selection of ornate shells, purchased in Thailand, inside a glass cabinet. Resembling a museum display case [for Pete's sake, it *was* a museum display case], it alludes to the 19th century tradition of collecting and classifying natural specimens. Inevitably, the approach involves removing plants and animals from their natural habitats, killing them in order to preserve them ...

But Hirst was not buying seashells for sport.

In the grassy median of Park Lane, near Hyde Park Speakers' Corner, is the Animals in War memorial—"Unveiled 24 November 2004 by Princess Anne." Its two sweeping curves of stone wall resemble parts of a non-Euclidian traffic barrier. On the inside of one curve is carved THEY HAD NO CHOICE. Bronze pack mules march toward the gap between the walls. Beyond the gap a bronze dog and a bronze horse walk away, metaphorically in heaven, though actually farther up Park Lane. A eulogy mentions even pigeons. No need to cast one in bronze, though, with so many live ones alighting on the monument.

Here are some British newspaper items I collected on my visit:

A leading cancer charity has rejected a £30,000 donation from the organiser of sponsored bird shoots because it does not approve of the way the money was raised.

—*The Sunday Telegraph*, March 20

Professor John Webster, emeritus professor at Bristol University, discussed the intelligence of chickens at a conference organized by Compassion in World Farming ... They are intelligent, sensitive characters.

—*The Times*, March 31



Being a better shot was the only one I could think of, and I've been trying for forty years to no avail.

"Using a pack of dogs," Mike continued, "with the best will in the world, you can't do much about the cruelty. And in practical terms it's impossible to have legislation that covers everything."

I asked if class conflict was involved in the hunting ban.

"From our perspective," Mike said, "there's no class element at all. Hare coursing is banned, though it's working-class." (Hare coursing is letting greyhounds chase hares in a field—a sort of libertarian dog racing without the bother of a track.)

"In the minds of ordinary people,"

he said he couldn't vouch for it personally. Someone on the league's staff had told it to him. At a fox-hunting protest, before the ban, one of the protesters had gone up to a hunter and said, "We're going to make what you do illegal."

The hunter looked down from his horse and said, "People like you obey the law. People like us make the law."

The point of the anecdote is contradicted by what I saw in Exmoor, and exactly opposite to what has happened legislatively, but it still makes good telling. That is, if you understand what's going on in Britain. I don't.

I walked from the League Against Cruel Sports offices, in Southwark, to

Nine New Forest firefighters were involved in freeing a frog from the spout of a watering can. A gardener took the trapped frog to the fire station ... It was released after half an hour's vigorous cutting with a hacksaw.

— *The Times*, March 28

As for the well-being of people:

A middle-aged teacher is starting a six-month jail sentence today because she decided to fight back against "yobs" with a pellet gun.

Linda Walker, 47 ... was being driven towards breaking point by groups of youth "terrorising" her neighborhood ... She rushed out of her house at night to confront a knot of teenagers ... After an exchange of abuse ... Mrs. Walker squared up to one 18-year-old, firing off several rounds from the [compressed-air-powered] pistol into nearby ground ...

Mrs. Walker was found guilty of affray and possessing a firearm with intent to cause fear of violence.

— *The Times*, March 30

Of course, there's always the possibility that Barmy Britannia—or a certain part of her—is crazy like a ...

The more aspects of life that can be moved from private reign to public realm, the better it is for politics. Politicians don't exactly want to ban hunting or forbid shooting teen goons with BBs. Politicians just want to turn everything, right down to what the dog chases, into a political matter. And they've succeeded. The day I arrived in Britain, Tony Blair was beginning his run for re-election. The campaign issue making headlines was school lunch menus.

Ordinary people have ordinary knowledge: how to make things (including lunch), grow things, fix things, build things, and, for that matter, kill things. Politicians have extraordinary knowledge: how all things ought to be. Never mind that they do not, as it were, run with the hare or hunt with the hounds.

All things ought to be, as far as I'm concerned, the way they were on Tom Yandle's farm. When the dinner after the stag hunt was over, at one in the morning, Tom got up from the table and said, "I'm going to change my trousers and have a look at the lambing." More than a thousand of his ewes were on the verge of giving birth.

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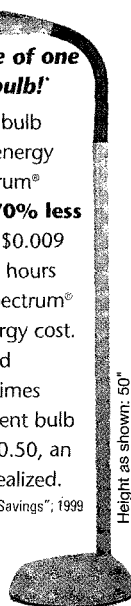
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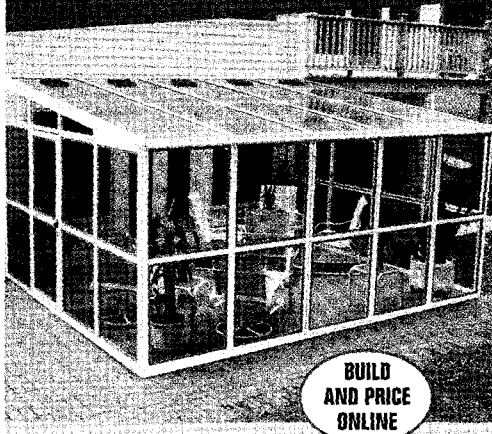
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A vet comes with a portable machine and gives them sonograms—better service than yuppie moms get. If a ewe is having one lamb, she can be left on her own in the fields. But twins can confuse a ewe, especially if it's her first lambing. She may not know if both or either is hers. Tom went into a shed the size of a modest railroad station, where hundreds of sheep were in twenty or so pens. Then he climbed onto a wooden railing separating two banks of pens and, though he is seventy and had done as much justice to the wine at dinner as I had, walked the rail's length looking for newborns. When he spotted a pair, Tom would jump among the sheep, hoist each lamb by a leg, and begin backing toward the pen's gate. This would cause at first a few, then a couple, and then, usually, just one of the ewes to follow him—the others dropping back with, frankly, sheepish looks as they (I guess) realized they hadn't had any lambs yet. Then mother and children were put in a stall to bond.

The lambs were still damp from birth, making their first steps, quad-toddling with each little hoof boxing the compass. They were adorable. Also, rather frequently, they were dead. Scores of dead lambs lay in the aisle of the lambing shed, nature being profligate with adorability. As man is. The living lambs would be dead soon enough. Delicious, too.

It's tempting to meditate on how vivid and real the lambing was, compared with politics. Except that Tom's farm is itself a political construct. Sheep farming is heavily subsidized in Great Britain. Without the subsidies the green grazing in the valley of the River Exe would be gone. The handsome agricultural landscape of which the British are so proud, carefully husbanded since Boudicca's day, would be replaced by natural growth. The most likely growth is real-estate developments. There's room for any number of charming weekend getaway homes where the tired politicians of London could get some relaxation and perhaps a bit of sport—of a noncontroversial kind. According to the Hunting Act, "The hunting of rats is exempt." ■

P.J. O'Rourke is a correspondent for The Atlantic. His most recent book is Peace Kills.

ANSWERS TO THE JUNE PUZZLER

M	I	S	S	E	D	E	M	O	T	E	D
A	M	M	I	I	I	N	D	D	R	D	I
T	H	E	M	C	R	A	W	D	A	D	S
T	I	L	I	N	G	M	U	S	C	A	T
E	L	L	L	E	E	O	M	M	E	A	A
R	O	M	E	O	T	R	E	A	S	O	N
E	N	A	C	T	A	R	C	H	A	I	C
D	N	X	A	A	U	E	G	O	L	E	E
S	N	I	P	I	N	G	A	G	E	N	T
C	O	M	P	U	T	E	B	A	R	T	H
A	M	U	E	E	E	N	N	N	N	T	A
N	I	M	R	O	D	T	R	Y	O	U	T

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Across. 1. MISSED (homophone); E(MOTE)D 9. T + HEM; CRAW(DAD)S 10. T(O)ILING; MU'S + CAT 11. RO(ME)O; T + REASON 12. ENAG + T (rev.); ARCH + AIC (CIA rev.) 13. S(NIP)ING; AGENT (anag.) 14. COM(PUT)E; BA(R)TH 15. NI + MROD (rev.); TR(Y)OUT
Down. 1. MATTE + RED; SCAN(t) 2. S(M)ELL; MAXIM + UM 3. S(I)MILE; CAP(P)ER 4. DIR(G)E; T(AUNT)ED 5. E + NAMOR (rev.); R(EG)ENT 6. ODDS (first letters); MA(HOGAN)Y 7. T + RACE; SALERNO (anag.) 8. DI(STAN)CE; T + HAT



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Code Pairs

In thirteen squares of this puzzle's grid, intersecting Across and Down answers have different letters. In these cases both letters should be entered in the same square. The resulting thirteen pairs of letters provide the key for deciphering the unclued entry at 21 Across. Seven clue answers are capitalized.

Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 158.

ACROSS

1. Drive behind hill out West and hit head-on (6)
5. Notice tenor getting into playing a role (7)
11. Rig vote, upset with lack of balance? (7)
13. Writer in nightclub left (5)
14. Wearing titanium jewelry (6)
15. Bill considered wild, provincial ... and passable (6)
16. Covering for a pot addict, finally relaxed around company (3,4)
20. Bear crossing woods to machinery (7)
25. Island stuff a group of agents looked back at (7)
29. European region's border I skirted with snake (7)
30. Squeeze fermented juice on the tongue of a horse (6)
31. Vassar's foremost grad taking interest in sedative (6)
32. Smooth tree with peeling bark (5)
33. Note: formal wear sells (7)
34. Artificial chow containing processed gin (7)
35. Break away from predecessors partially, turning to the West (6)

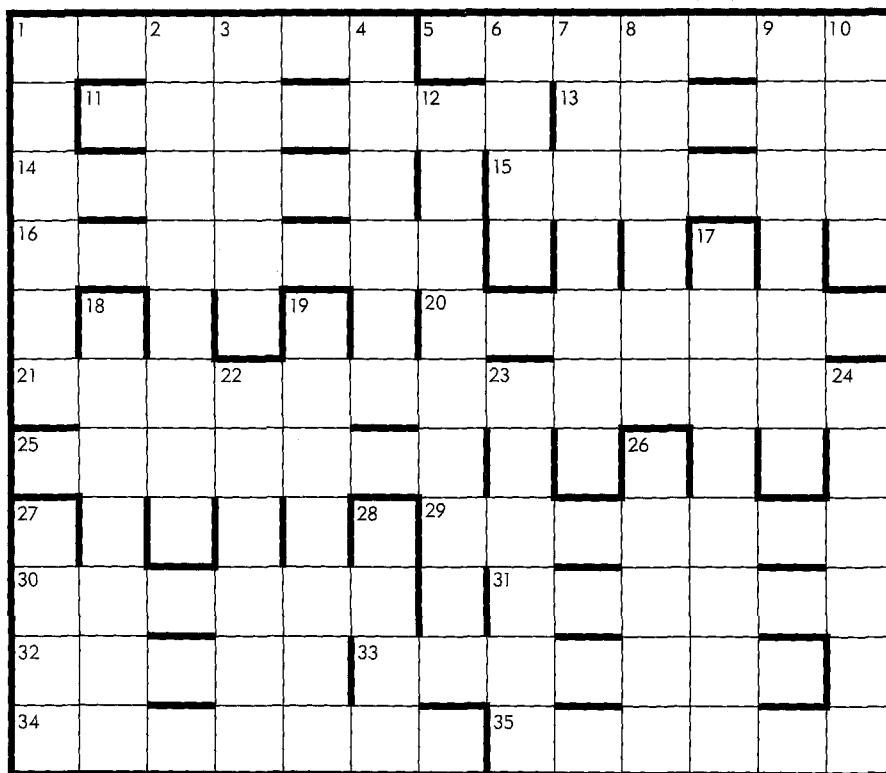
DOWN

1. Low point two times interrupting period of prosperity (6)
2. Large amount of information Betty altered about age (8)

3. Not very smart, putting arachnid outside front of house (5)
4. Returning GI Joe initially, visited puzzlemaker? (6)
6. Cries of amazement get lost from behind (4)
7. Philosopher in Australia entering resort (7)
8. Besides myself, about 100 on the way (2,4)
9. Edited out cow, keeping original of doctored print (7)
10. Stringer's material maintaining Liberal excess (4)
12. Grate in triangular part of a wall is within reach (9)
17. Puff up corn, including blend from the east (8)

18. Walk unsteadily in crumbly rock around Manitoba (7)
19. Go in van all over French city (7)
22. Finish first in spree, going on (6)
23. Comprehending nothing, ends game (6)
24. Burning livestock youngster with iron superficially (6)
26. Curse about Long Island spring, maybe (5)
27. Agent's exercise units (4)
28. Paltry pond (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.





WORD FUGITIVES

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

In March, Word Fugitives sought an American equivalent for the Irish term *witches' knickers*, which refers to "disposable plastic bags caught in trees." This earned us a scolding from Kathleen Dotoli, of Long Branch, New Jersey, who wrote, "I do not believe *witches' knickers* should be messed with, as it is a perfect description." Lee Buenaventura, of Wellesley, Massachusetts, felt nearly the same way, but she suggested giving the term a "tweak" to Americanize it: *witches' briches*.

Then again, reports of existing American terms arrived from all over. People on both coasts and in between submitted *urban tumbleweed*. R. Matthew Green, of West Kingston, Rhode Island, said that in his state "bags caught in trees, flapping in the wind, are called *shoppers' kites*." Sheilah Zimpel, of Raleigh, North Carolina, wrote, "Here in the South we call that *white trash*." Samuel Hoffman, of Fort Wayne, Indiana, wrote, "Plastic bags trapped in trees and along fence lines are called *bag hawks*."

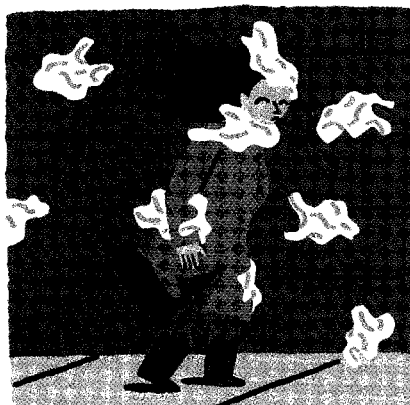
This query also presented an unexpected opportunity for score-settling among interstate rivals. Kristen Lummis, of Grand Junction, Colorado, wrote, "A plastic bag caught in a tree (or a barbed-wire fence), flapping in the wind, is known as *the state bird of Wyoming*." And Richard R. Crowder, of Lynchburg, Virginia, proposed the term *West Virginia state flag*.

But surely a good term should apply more broadly—even outside the United States, especially since the person who requested the word in the first place is Canadian. Suggestions that would be appropriate almost anywhere include *totebirds*, from George Campbell, of St. Paul, Minnesota; *retailed hawks*, from Daniel Scheub, of Dixon, Illinois; *trash kites*, from Linda Muhlhause, of Tinton Falls, New Jersey; *treecycled plastic*, from Jonathan Stone, of Annapolis, Maryland; *Glad® rags*, from John R. Ehrenfeld, of

Lexington, Massachusetts; and *detreetus*, submitted by more than one person.

Daniel Brown, of San Carlos, California, wrote, "I suggest *fooliage*, since the bags come from morons careless with their trash." Rob Barendse, of Granville, New York, suggested *plastoliage*. Can you see it coming? That's right: *fouliage*. Michael Abrams, of Custer, Washington, was the first person to send in this coinage, so he takes top honors.

The other word sought in March was one to describe "that dicey moment when you should introduce two people but can't remember one of their names."



This earned us a scolding too. Michael Huston, of Joplin, Missouri, wrote, "A strange word indeed. If it really must be a word for 'that dicey moment,' then I have no entry. However, it seems that *whomnesia* is the word for the introducer's affliction." Good point, Michael. It wasn't clear whether the fugitive word should describe the moment per se, what one might perform instead of an introduction, or one's state of mind in that dicey moment. Therefore we'll accept anything halfway relevant. *Namenesia* was far and away the commonest suggestion.

Susan K. Costello, of New York City, proposed *persona non data*. Peter Anderson, of Joliet, Illinois, proposed *nomstruck*. Carolyn Coleburn, of Ridgefield, Connecticut, wrote, "May I suggest *nomen-clutchure*? It happens to me all the time."

Josh Dodes, of Burlington, Vermont, wrote, "If meeting people and making introductions is the key to successful networking, this is clearly *notworking*."

Patty Namm, of New York City, wrote, "That dicey moment is called a *mumble-duction*." Barbara Jacobs, of Medfield, Massachusetts, said it was an *introduction*; Bonnie Brueckner, of La Jolla, California, an *introduction*; and Emily Etheridge, of Louisville, Kentucky, an *ain'troduction*.

Who deserves top honors for nailing our admittedly vaguely defined idea? Let's give them to Peter Gaffney, of Los Angeles, for a pair of coinages that together cover the possibilities pretty well. Gaffney wrote, "If you weasel out of the situation by contriving to get someone else to provide the names, it's *introducing*. *Introducing* is giving the appearance of making an introduction without actually so doing."

Now PATRICIA L. SIERZANT, of Malvern, Pennsylvania, writes, "I job-share a position. I often have to refer to *the lady I job-share with*. I wonder if there is a better term for her. Someone suggested *colleague*, but I don't think that quite does it. Any suggestions?"

And MARGARET STACY, of Avon, Connecticut, writes, "How about a term for a smell that you recognize but can't place?"

Send words that meet Patricia Sierzant's or Margaret Stacy's needs to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114, or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by August 31. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you'd like The Atlantic's help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose words are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment's correspondents will be sent Thomas Jefferson: Author of America, by Christopher Hitchens; Imperial Grunts, by Robert D. Kaplan; and 1491, by Charles C. Mann.

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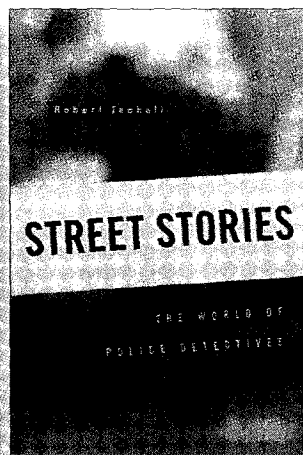
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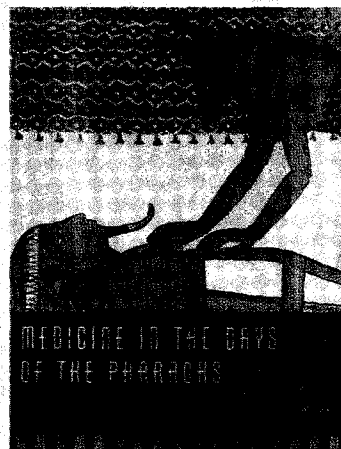
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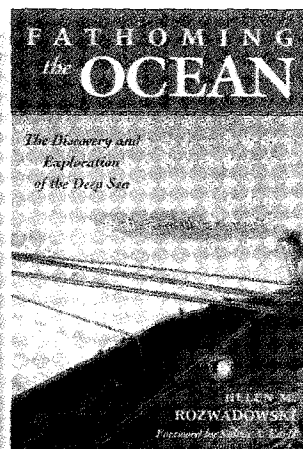
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A Gentleman, of a Kind

Prince Rainier of Monaco (1923–2005)

BY MARK STEYN

The Grimaldis had been intermittent rulers of their patch of the Côte d'Azur for three centuries before deciding, in 1612, to make themselves "princes." But unlike other European princes, Honoré II, Seigneur de Monaco, opted to be styled not "His Royal Highness" but "His Serene Highness." For the last two decades of Prince Rainier's long reign over Monte Carlo, few highnesses had less to be serene about.

His American wife, who'd brought celluloid glamour to a realm where the real thing had been in short supply, died after a car crash in 1982.

His older, "sensible" daughter married unsuitable Euro-playboys.

His younger, wilder daughter—now an older, wilder fortysomething—preferred consorting with butlers, gardeners, elephant trainers, and a Portuguese trapeze artist. Her marriage to her bodyguard collapsed after he was captured on film guarding somewhat too closely somebody else's body—that of Miss Bare Breasts of Belgium. Princess Stephanie was herself no slouch in that department, as the most casual student of European photojournalism of the late twentieth century would confirm. For a few months after using the high-speed Internet in a Paris hotel, I regularly woke up to spam e-mail containing extensive pictorials of Her Serene Highness giving us the full Monte, naked on a beach and engaged in the act of, ah, self-pleasuring. Possibly she was between circus acts at the time. At any rate, Stephanie's youngest child has a father whose identity, for whatever reason, cannot be made public. It's presumably not the elephant trainer, or Princess Grace's old Hollywood pals would have been round to serenade the kid with "Born in a Trunk."

If his daughter's life in middle age appeared to be one unending audition for *Desperate Royal Housewives*, Rainier's son, in contrast, declined to produce an heir or indeed any evidence that he was

much interested in the principal activity likely to lead to that happy event. As *The New York Times* nudgingly reported, "Prince Albert, meanwhile, has been linked to a long list of high-profile women known for appearing on the arms of middle-aged bachelors. There have been no signs of anything like a romance." Hmm. But just as you think the *Times* is trying to tell us something, His Serene Highness concedes in a notarized document that he's fathered a child in Paris by a Togolese woman. Oh, come off it, you cry. How many euros did that scam cost? But it's true: they've matched the DNA. It's his best career move in decades.

Easy lay the head that wore the crown, but underneath a profound sadness etched itself into Rainier's face. He aged a quarter century in the couple of years after Princess Grace's death, and as the eighties rolled into the nineties it sometimes seemed as if the entire House of Grimaldi's sense of itself had careered round the hairpin bends on the Grande Corniche and plunged over the cliff with his beloved wife.

His was the worst-timed death since Aldous Huxley expired on the day of President Kennedy's assassination. Europe's longest-reigning monarch shuffled off a couple of days after the pope, and so, though his nuptials had been hailed as the wedding of the century, his passing wasn't even the funeral of the week. Nonetheless, in the half century between the Duke of Windsor and the Princess of Wales, he was, briefly, the only member of a European dynasty to capture the imagination of the American public.

When Fred Astaire began his partnership with Ginger Rogers, Katharine Hepburn observed that he gave her class and she gave him sex. With Prince Rainier and Grace Kelly, she gave him class and sex, and it wasn't entirely

obvious what a stiff, moustachioed chap never exactly dashing even in his youth brought to the table. Monaco was, in Somerset Maugham's unimprovable summation, "a sunny place for shady people," and exposed to the light they didn't bear too-close scrutiny. Jack Kelly, Grace's father and a respectable self-made millionaire in the Philadelphia construction business, couldn't have been less impressed if she'd come home with one of Princess Stephanie's circus acrobats: he's reported to have said, "I don't want any damn broken-down prince who is head of a pinhead country that nobody knows anything about to marry my daughter." And who can blame him? If you'd married off Lana Turner, Betty Hutton, Mitzi Gaynor, or any of the other livelier Hollywood cheesecake into a European royal house, you'd have had the premise for a lame B-comedy. But Grace Kelly was already more regal than most real princesses, speaking the queen's English with an amused, languid, rarefied overarticulateness that the queen couldn't get away with. As Frank Sinatra sang to her in *High Society*,

I don't care
If you are called the fair
Miss Frigidaire ...

She was certainly the most glacial of Hitchcock blondes, cooler with Jimmy Stewart than any leading lady before or after. In the last great group shot of Euro-royals before her death—at the Prince of Wales's (first) wedding in 1981—she's carrying herself with far more sense of her royalness than, say, the queen of the Netherlands, never mind Their Royal Highnesses the Duchess of Gloucester and Princess Michael of Kent.

In contrast, when Prince Rainier succeeded his grandfather, in 1949, he was taking over an enterprise whose best days appeared well behind it. The pocket principality had suffered from France's legalization of gambling in 1933, after a century of prohibition. It seemed unlikely ever to return to its nineteenth-century heyday, when British music-hall songs hymned its raffish charms.

As I walk along the Bois Boolong
With an independent air
You can hear the girls declare



"He must be a millionaire."
You can hear them sigh and wish
to die,
You can see them wink the other eye
At the Man Who Broke the Bank at
Monte Carlo.

The verse spells it out bluntly:
"Dame Fortune smiled upon me as she'd
never done before, / And I've now such
lots of money, I'm a gent."

That was the Grimaldis: lots of money made them gentlemen, of a kind. Rainier's mother, Princess Charlotte, was the result of a liaison between Prince Louis II and Marie-Juliette Louvet, the daughter of a laundrywoman who'd made her way to the nightclubs of Montmartre and become a "cabaret singer." After taking up with Louis, she gave birth to their daughter Charlotte in Algeria in 1898. The Grimaldis gave Charlotte the bum's rush for most of her childhood, until—in the absence of any other heir, and laboring mightily under a thirteenth-century curse on the family—they passed a law recognizing her as Louis's daughter. This was struck down by the courts, so in 1919 they tried again, retrospectively legitimizing her and belatedly declaring the Montmartre nightclub act's Algerian love child a

heir apparent princess, Duchess of Valentinois and first in line to succeed Louis II. As Charlotte's mother must have occasionally reflected, you came the long way to Prince Louis.

The following year Princess Charlotte was married to the Comte Pierre de Polignac, and in 1923 they had a son: Rainier. His duty done, M. le Comte was of no further use to Charlotte. "To make love," she sneered, "he needs to put a crown on his head." Under the terms of their divorce Polignac was forbidden to set foot in Monaco. Princess Charlotte eventually became a social worker and turned the Grimaldi estate outside Paris into a rehab facility for ex-cons. As for young Rainier, he was sent to enjoy the pleasures of boys' school in England, where M. le Comte attempted to reassert his parental authority. It was the British High Court that restored "Fat Little Monaco" (as he was known to his schoolmates) to his grandfather's custody.

By the time Fatty succeeded Prince Louis, the men who fancied breaking the bank at Monte Carlo had moved down the coast to Cannes and elsewhere, and the bank itself was near broke. The Société des Bains de Mer, which ran the casino and hotels, reported huge losses that year. Next the Société Monégasque

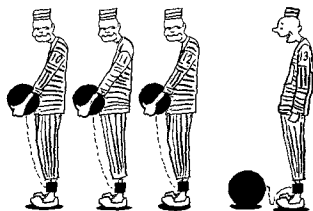
de Banques et de Métaux Précieux, which held 55 percent of Monaco's reserves and much of the Grimaldi fortune, went bust. Aristotle Onassis, who served as the young Rainier's *éminence* Greece, thought a marriage into movie-star glamour might restore the principality's fortunes; he sounded out Marilyn Monroe, to no avail. Then, while in the area for the Cannes Film Festival, Grace Kelly was taken to the palace for a photo shoot, and Rainier made his move.

It worked out well. His bride embarked on the usual charitable activities associated with royal consorts, but with the benefit of a much livelier Rolodex: old chums like Sinatra and Bob Hope turned Monégasque fundraising galas into the touring version of the starrier Friars' Club roasts. Tourism and development followed. Monaco is a small town of 30,000 people, mostly tax exiles but with about 6,000 Monégasques to play the role of Rainier's loyal subjects. As land was reclaimed and skyscrapers loomed over the fishing boats, Monaco's stellar princess gave her husband a cachet denied to other mini-me Euro-royals.

Princess Grace missed movies, and Rainier gave her permission to return to her old job for Hitchcock's *Marnie*. But his people found the idea vulgar and demeaning, and so *High Society* remained the House of Grimaldi's last on-camera performance until Princess Stephanie's husband made his film debut with *Miss Bare Breasts of Belgium*. By then Rainier was old, stooped, and exhausted; his princess was dead; and his children seemed determined to return the family name to its seedy antecedents. He made his dilapidated casino kingdom briefly romantic, and when he couldn't maintain the romance, he had the satisfaction of knowing that at least he'd made Monaco bankable again. But the thirteenth-century family curse came along for the ride, and in the end it broke the man at Monte Carlo. ■

Mark Steyn is a columnist for Britain's *Telegraph* Group, the Chicago Sun-Times, and other publications.

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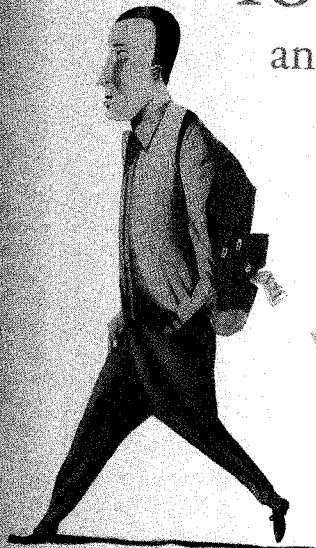
WHO'S WHO

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of the investor who
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